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JUDAISM

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DAVID BEN GURION'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE DIASPORA

Zeev Tzahor

THE CONTRIBUTION OF ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL

Samuel H. Dresner

GERSHOM SCHOLEM AND ANARCHISM AS A
JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

David Biale

THE MISSION OF ISRAEL IN A NUCLEAR AGE

Levi A. Olan

THE RELIGIOUS CRIMINAL

Jeffrey M. Cohen

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JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication among Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

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JUDAISM

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God." From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.

The First Reader

Ben Gurion and the Diaspora

It is undeniable that David Ben Gurion is one of the great sons of the Jewish people and that he occupies a place among the leading statesmen in the world during the twentieth century. Greatness, however, is not synonymous with infallibility; even prophets sometimes err in their predictions.

In his paper, "David Ben Gurion's Attitude Toward the Diaspora," *Ze'ev Tzahor* presents a careful and balanced analysis of Ben Gurion's basic attitudes toward the Diaspora, the Jewish State, and the Jewish heritage in the Diaspora and in the homeland.

He maintains that Ben Gurion persistently regarded the Diaspora as doomed, and the products of its culture — like its leaders and scholars — as insignificant. The author is able to document this approach by quotations from Ben Gurion's writings.

However, as the Editor can testify, on the basis of his personal meetings with Ben Gurion and the latter's correspondence with him, this negative attitude was not Ben Gurion's only reaction. In many ways, he expressed a genuine respect for the cultural heritage produced after the Bible in the Diaspora and for modern-day scholars who have explicated this culture for their generation. But this favorable assessment tended to be private and personal. Perhaps some day it will be documented as well. Basically, *Tzahor* has presented Ben Gurion's public position fairly and well.

"Religious" Does Not Necessarily Mean "Moral"

A striking and disturbing phenomenon in contemporary Jewish life is the frequency with which "religious" Jews have engaged in immoral and even criminal practices. Obviously, the malefactors are a tiny minority, yet they are common enough to raise basic questions with regard to the sincerity of their religious professions and the impact of faith upon moral conduct.

In "The Religious Criminal," *Jeffrey M. Cohen* makes a contribution to this question, several aspects of which have already been examined in our

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columns during the past few years. He suggests a fundamental distinction between those who "have Torah" and those who "are Torah," as a clue to antisocial behavior among these elements of the Jewish community.

The Jews Have a Mission

Seminal ideas have a long life expectancy. Throughout Jewish history the concept of Israel as an *Am Kadosh*, "a holy nation," has persisted in a variety of forms down to the modern doctrine of "the mission of Israel." The nuclear threat poses the prospect of annihilation for the human race. In his paper, "The Mission of Israel in a Nuclear Age," *Levi A. Olan* declares that the nuclear age calls upon the Jewish people to respond forthrightly to the Divine command, "Life and death I place before you this day. Choose life, for yourself and for your children."

Faith and Reason are Compatible

As soon as man developed the capacity for abstract thought in dim antiquity, the tension arose between faith and reason, often formulated as the conflict between religion and philosophy. It will continue as long as men seek a rational basis for belief in a transcendent Being who is accessible to human hopes and desires. A capsule definition of theology might well be "the ongoing enterprise of reconciling religion and philosophy."

One of the most significant efforts to solve the problem is that of "process philosophy." In his paper "Judaism and Process Philosophy," *William E. Kaufman* argues that this approach offers an excellent basis for a rational yet positive Jewish faith.

A Realistic Look Backwards

A tendency to glorify the past, combined with the effects of a weak memory, leads people to exaggerate the virtues of yesteryear. It is a tendency as old as mankind itself. Twenty-one centuries ago, the biblical sage, Koheleth, warned his readers, "Do not say 'What has happened, the earlier days were better than these!' for not wisely have you raised the question." The Romans had a phrase for this weakness, *laudatores temporis acti* "those who praise times gone by."

In Jewish life, we frequently contrast the laxity of observance in our own day with the presumed piety of the past. *Solomon B. Freehof* draws upon the vast resources of the Responsa literature of the Middle Ages to demonstrate that non-observance was a perpetual problem for Jewish leadership. What is more, he suggests that widespread non-observance in

some areas proved to be an important factor in the evolution of Jewish law. His paper "Non-Observance and Jewish Law," offers new insight into the character of the Halakhah.

Women in the Bible: Another View

No other single source has had so profound an impact on the status of women and their role in society as has the Bible. For centuries it molded the dominant attitude toward them and affected their legal and extra-legal position in society. The rise of the Women's Liberation Movement in our day has led to a renewed examination of biblical and post-biblical sources dealing with women, their nature and their function.

As is perhaps to be expected, there has been a polarization of views. On the one hand, some scholars have called attention to the undoubted position of inferiority which women occupy in biblical society, reflected preeminently in the law codes. On the other hand, apologists for tradition have called attention to the gallery of outstanding women, from Eve to Esther, whose sharply etched portraits testify to the recognition of them as personalities and not as chattel.

Where does the truth lie? In his paper, "A Typology of Biblical Women," *Frederick E. Greenspahn* demonstrates that both attitudes may be documented from biblical sources. Actually, the author identifies three, not two, principal categories that are to be found in the Bible.

The Midrash on the Shema

The Bible, which is actually a library of extraordinary dimensions, stands as the greatest statement in the world on man, his nature and his destiny. This extraordinary achievement would have sufficed, of itself, to accord to the Jewish people a unique role in human civilization. However, the Jewish genius did not content itself with the Bible. The Rabbinic approach, embodied in the Aggadah, went beyond the biblical word and deepened and extended its implications.

Thus, the great biblical affirmation of faith, the *Shema*, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One," served the rabbis of the Midrash as a point of departure for many religious and ethical insights that treat the patriarch Jacob as a symbol of a loving father concerned for the physical and spiritual well-being of his children.

In his essay, "A Legend Concerning the Origins of the Shema," *Reuven Hammer* presents the salient sections of a Midrash on that prayer. The text is accompanied by an illuminating commentary.

More than a decade has elapsed since the death of Abraham Joshua Heschel. His impact on contemporary thought, both in the Jewish community and the world at large, far from diminishing because of his physical absence, has continued to grow, testifying to the truth of the rabbinic dictum that "the righteous even in their death are truly alive."

Samuel H. Dresner, one of the most dedicated and assiduous students of Heschel and his thought, devotes the first of two papers to the theme, "The Contribution of Abraham Joshua Heschel." It includes new and interesting material, not hitherto accessible, on Heschel's background and early activities. The second paper will appear in the next issue of JUDAISM.

Gershom Scholem's Contribution

In February, 1982, Gershom Scholem died in Jerusalem. Almost single-handedly he had created and developed a new and independent discipline in Jewish learning, the scientific study of Jewish mysticism and its role in Jewish history and thought. This achievement alone would suffice to give him a unique place in the ranks of modern Jewish scholarship.

In his paper, "Gershom Scholem and Anarchism as a Jewish Philosophy," *David Biale* indicates that Scholem did much more. All his work was predicated on the view that pluralism had always prevailed in Judaism, and it was this variety of "philosophical anarchism" to which Scholem was dedicated.

It may be added that, though Scholem regarded all the varieties of Judaism, such as the legal, the philosophic and the mystical as equally legitimate, the fact that he held the mystical to be the major source of Jewish vitality suggests that, for him, mysticism and the irrational were more legitimately equal than the others!

While paying high tribute to Scholem's scholarly achievement and pluralistic approach to Jewish tradition, Biale points out the problems that confront Scholem's secularism and philosophic anarchism when they are pressed into service as positive formulations of Jewish life. He regards their principal value to be as stimuli to established schools of thought, "anarchic breezes" helping to revive the spirit of Judaism.

Does The Bible Really Say So?

A familiar proverb declares that "the Devil can quote Scripture for his own purpose." By a *kal vahomer*, it follows that "religious people" have

used the Bible to advance their own ideas, not always legitimately. In his paper, "The Bible and Politics," *Rifat Sonsino* illustrates the misuse of the Bible, citing several trenchant examples in recent history.

The Aggadah Continues to Grow

An interesting characteristic of Jewish literature seems to be the ongoing interest in similar themes, constantly reinterpreted according to the spirit of the age in which it was written. In his paper, "The Aggadic Tradition," *Howard Schwartz* develops this idea, starting with the Bible and coming down to our day.

The Uniqueness of Jerusalem

It may be argued that no city in the world has so unique a character as Jerusalem, new and old. The tremendous hold that the Holy City has upon visitor and inhabitant alike is described in *Mordecai Roshwald's* paper, "Jerusalem, A Portrait," following upon his recent essay on Tel Aviv which appeared in the summer 1982 issue of JUDAISM.

Equally reemarkable is the passionate love for the city which has crossed the centuries, and which attempts to see the past and the present in the same place. In a review-essay, "'Upper City' then - 'Jewish Quarter' Now," *Salamon Faber* surveys the discoveries made in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem as described in a work by the Israeli archaeologist Nahman Avigad.

Halakhah Means Movement

For the past two centuries, modernism, in all its aspects, has had a powerful and even devastating impact on tradition and the increasing tempo of change has exacerbated the strength of the challenge.

The confrontation between traditional life and thought on the one hand, and the contemporary outlook and way of life on the other, can be resolved in several ways. The first is the all-but-total surrender of tradition in favor of the modern outlook. The second, its mirror-image, is the rejection of modern views in order to maintain the tradition, officially unchanged. (That this is an impossibility is generally overlooked.) The third approach seeks to analyze the nature of tradition through a study of its history, which reveals its responsiveness to the conditions and ideas of each age. The effort is then made to apply these canons of development and change characteristic of the tradition in the past to the problems and needs of the present and, thus, make tradition viable and relevant.

In his review-essay, "Making the Halakhah Viable," *Theodore Friedman* reviews and discusses the work of an Israeli scholar, Zeev Falk, who adopts the third path, obviously the most difficult of the options, but richest in its possibilities for the future.

Paul and the Torah: An Addendum

In a private communication, Professor Michael Wyschogrod points out that I misstated his position when I wrote (JUDAISM, Fall 1982, p. 507) that "Wyschogrod maintains that Paul upheld the binding authority of the Torah always and for everyone." I regret my misunderstanding, in view of Professor Wyschogrod's statement that "Jewish-Christians would have to continue living under the Torah, while gentiles needed only to obey the Noahide commandments "(JUDAISM, Summer 1982, p. 361).

I am very sorry for the error. In extenuation, I would note the implication in Dr. Wyschogrod's article that Paul believed in the enduring authority of the Torah, since he expected Jewish-Christians to observe it. Obviously, Paul's activity as a missionary to the gentiles could result only in an increase in *their* ranks and in a corresponding reduction in numbers and in influence of the Jewish-Christians, until their eventual disappearance in the new church. It therefore seems clear that, for Paul, the authority of the Torah was a transitory phenomenon.

R.G.

David Ben Gurion's Attitude Toward the Diaspora

ZEEV TZAHOR

IN 1961, WHEN DAVID BEN GURION, ISRAEL'S premier, was at the peak of his power, he declared, "I am neither a Zionist nor a nationalist." He explained this statement (which seemingly belied everything he had done since his immigration to Palestine fifty five years previously) in a letter to Professor Baruch Kurzweil of Bar Ilan University:

I said that I am not a Zionist and not a nationalist because the source of my Judaism lies in the history of the Jewish people, its heritage and its place of origin: Abraham the Patriarch and Moses and Joshua and Micah and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Hillel and Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yehuda Halevi were neither "nationalists" nor "Zionists." These words were alien to them and meant nothing to them and they mean nothing to me. I have no need of them.¹

This statement by the 75-year-old premier was neither a slip of the tongue nor the expression of some fleeting resentment but, rather, the summing up of a clearly defined outlook which he had advocated throughout decades of public life and activity. For a large part of his career Ben Gurion had held senior positions in the leadership of the Yishuv in Palestine and in the Zionist movement. The Jewish people in that period had undergone intensive and traumatic experiences to which Ben Gurion made constant reference. His speeches, letters and diaries, covering more than half a million pages in his Archives in Sdeh Boker, demonstrate the stages of development and change which he underwent over the years and the effect of historical upheavals on his social and political views. It would seem that on only one issue did his views remain fixed and unchanged from his childhood in Plonsk to his death — his attitude towards the Diaspora.

Ben Gurion decided in his early childhood that he would one day immigrate to Palestine.² This decision was not uncommon in the atmosphere of the Jewish Eastern European community at the turn of the century, but the fact that he implemented it was a direct challenge to the

1. Ben Gurion's letter to Professor Kurzweil, 9.7.61, Ben Gurion Archives, File 1061 (according to classification system used in Ben Gurion's lifetime).

2. D. Ben Gurion, *Beit Avi* (My Father's House) (Tel Aviv, 1973), p. 69.

ZEEV TZAHOR is a lecturer in history at Ben Gurion University, with a specialty in the Zionist movement. He was secretary to David Ben Gurion from 1970 to 1973.

many Jews who dreamed of settling in Palestine but chose to direct their footsteps westward, mainly to the United States. Ben Gurion's resolution to settle in Palestine was neither a romantic dream nor the result of a search for personal fulfilment. He analysed his motives soberly and contrasted his own decision with that of his close friend, Shmuel Fuchs, who had also dreamed of Palestine since his childhood. Fuchs, however, eventually decided to migrate to the United States. Like many young Zionists at the time, Fuchs claimed that he remained a loyal Zionist but that to settle in Palestine in 1904 would be a futile gesture, since there was nothing he could do there at that stage. He had to prepare for immigration, acquire a profession and await a more suitable time.

Ben Gurion was outraged. In a blunt letter he wrote to his good friend:

Let us not delude ourselves with empty phrases. Our situation is so terrible, so fearsome. This is the most dangerous epoch in our history. Here in the Diaspora there is nothing for us young people to do. The general flood will sweep us away against our will. If we do not work there, in Zion, with dedication, then we are lost!³

This statement, expressed by a boy of eighteen, was to be reiterated, with various modifications, throughout his life. His beliefs were influenced by the spirit of the times: the Jewish people in the Diaspora, he claimed, was perverted, ailing, its way of life abnormal, its occupations ignoble; it was debasing itself and, therefore, arousing the ire of the peoples among whom it resided. Like Herzl before him, his reference to the Jewish life in the Diaspora shows a tendency to generalization, aversion and dissociation.

This way of life, according to Ben Gurion, could be cast off in only one way — by going to Palestine. The act of immigration would guide the young and energetic Jew to a life of labour, and the living conditions in Palestine would steer him towards agricultural labour, which, according to the norms of the period, symbolized the return to the true origins of mankind, to physical and mental health and to the essence of all that is good in man.⁴

During his first visit to the United States, in 1915, Ben Gurion published an article in the *Kempfer Shtimme* in which he proclaimed with pathos:

We seek a homeland in Palestine — we want to correct therein the Diaspora tradition, to make contact with the source of vitality, creativity and health — the land — and to renew our life in the homeland.⁵

In expounding his beliefs, Ben Gurion arrived at total negation of the Diaspora and, in effect, of everything that was not connected with "life in

3. D. Ben Gurion, *Igrot* (Letters), Part A (Tel Aviv, 1971), p. 39.

4. H.H. Rose, *The Life and Thought of A.D. Gordon* (N.Y., 1964), pp. 90-102.

5. *Kempfer Shtimme*, No. 27 (New York, 1915).

the homeland." Some of his statements exceeded the bound of rationalism:

The Palestinian worker differs from the Jewish worker in the Diaspora in his historical origin, his economic structure, his social aspirations, his national mission — his path is different and new.

This was written nine years after he migrated. Ben Gurion was then one of the veterans of the Second Aliyah, that wave of young socialists from Russia who initiated the revolutionary endeavour, establishing communes and collectivist projects. But he himself spent long periods during these years outside of Palestine. Most of the comrades of whom he was writing had been in Palestine for only two or three years.⁶ The fact that he defined his comrades as differing from Diaspora Jews in their "historical origin and economic structure" after so brief a period, suggests how profound was his emotional involvement in the issue. He believed, in fact, that the very act of immigration created a rift between Palestine and the Diaspora, between the inhabitants of the country, however brief their sojourn there, and their brethren who had stayed behind. He described this difference in vivid language. The Diaspora Jew was the fruit of

generations of suffering of an oppressed, battered people . . . the helplessness and sterile rage of a miserable stepchild . . . a people detached from labour and cut off from land.

As for the Palestinian antithesis,

the vision of renaissance and revolution has glowed upon him . . . this daring immigrating Jewish youth, strong of spirit and stiffnecked, rebelling and creating . . . the blessed fountains which flow in the renewed homeland . . .

That article by the young Ben Gurion was written, as noted, in the United States during the First World War when the Yishuv in Palestine was undergoing a severe crisis. More than one third of the eighty-five thousand Jews in the country had been expelled or had fled, and Ben Gurion himself had been banished by the Turks. The few agricultural colonies were on the verge of ruin, while hunger, disease and physical extinction threatened those who remained in the country.

The Yishuv was then saved, thanks to no small extent to those same Jews who had preferred the United States over Palestine and who, taking advantage of the neutrality of the United States at this stage of the War, sent relatively large sums of money to enable the Yishuv to survive. But Ben Gurion did not regard this as justification of the Diaspora; rather the contrary. At that time he appears to have begun to feel a hatred of Jewish organizations in the Diaspora and their ramifications. During his first stay in the United States from 1915 to 1918, Ben Gurion sought contact with these organizations. The natural one was with his own party — Poalei Zion

6. Y. Gorni, "Changes in Social and Political Structure of the Second Aliyah" (Hebrew), *Ziyyonut A* (Tel Aviv, 1970).

(Workers of Zion). He had been one of the founders of Poalei Zion in his hometown of Plonsk, and had set up a local defence organization within the party framework there. Later, in Palestine, he was one of the leaders of the party and a member of the editorial board of its journal — *he-Ahдут* (Unity). But his encounter with the sister party in the United States was rife with misunderstandings. He was welcomed warmly at first and was appointed to senior posts, but a rift soon developed. The party was then part of the general labour movement in the United States which advocated revolutionary beliefs. The party leaders in New York regarded Ben Gurion as an alien shoot, involved in a marginal phenomenon, Palestine, in extreme and disproportionate fashion. They endeavoured to emphasize the socialist connotations of the movement as against the “bourgeois” essence of the Zionist movement.⁷

The friction between Ben Gurion and his fellow Poalei Zion leaders in the United States increased when, in contravention of the resolution of the American labour movement opposing American participation in the First World War, he and Nahman Syrkin began recruiting young Jews to a special Jewish battalion which was to aid the British Army in the task of capturing Palestine from the Turks. Disregarding the socialist claim that this was an “imperialist war,” Ben Gurion considered the recruitment project as an opportunity to further the aspiration of Jewish sovereignty over Palestine. But he soon discovered to what extent he was in the minority. It became clear to him that even the party which called itself Poalei Zion was not advocating self-realization in either the labour or the Zionist fields.

If the party acted thus, what could be expected of the Jewish public at large? The energetic Ben Gurion travelled from town to town lecturing and exhorting, mostly with the objective of recruiting volunteers to the Jewish Battalion. He became more and more convinced that there was scant hope of creating a mass immigration movement. Even his young wife, Pola, whom he had met in New York in 1917, tried to dissuade him from joining the Battalion and was not enthusiastic at the thought of living in Palestine.⁸

Finally, after a protracted and stubborn struggle, the Battalion was set up with some 2000 volunteers. This number of people, in terms of those days, could have changed the face of the Yishuv in Palestine, but Ben Gurion sensed his alienation from the American Jews even in his dealings with these volunteers. The prevailing language was, of course, Yiddish, the *lingua franca* of the Diaspora which he despised. The terminology was socialist in a style that Poalei Zion in Palestine had long since abandoned. The values nurtured in Palestine — settlement, communes, mutual aid projects — were alien to them and were considered anti-

7. S. Tevet, *Kinat David* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv, 1976), pp. 319-327.

8. Ben Gurion's letter to Poalei Zion Central Office USA, 18.1.18, *Igrot*, Part A, pp. 335-336.

Marxist. It soon transpired that very few of them planned to remain in Palestine and the disappointed Ben Gurion decided to leave the Battalion, one of whose founders he had been, and to join a special unit established by his Palestinian comrades.⁹

This first encounter with the United States served to confirm the convictions that Ben Gurion had held since childhood: life in the Diaspora corrupted the Jew and warped his way of life and his beliefs, while Palestine could create new, healthy and balanced individuals. Therefore, nothing was more important than immigration to Palestine.

All of his life Ben Gurion retained the memory of his meeting with the Diaspora during, and after, the First World War. As the years went by, he was often away from Palestine, sometimes for lengthy periods. Generally speaking, his encounters with the Diaspora were problematic and his missions often ended in friction with various organizations. A typical example was his mission to the "World Alliance of Poalei Zion" in 1920.

Shortly after his arrival in Palestine with the Jewish Battalion, he was discharged from the British Army and sent by the Party to London for the purpose of strengthening the ties among the various branches of the "World Alliance of Poalei Zion" and the Party in Palestine. This was the exhilarating period after the triumph of the Bolshevik revolution in the USSR, when it seemed that very soon similar revolutions would utterly change the face of Europe and, indeed, of the world. Large sectors of Jewish youth, particularly in Eastern Europe, were attracted by the opportunity to take part in such a revolution, and, by contrast, the challenge of immigration to Palestine and the establishment of agricultural communes appeared tame.

Ben Gurion, who was still considered a rigid socialist and who venerated Lenin,¹⁰ found himself engaged in a frustrating struggle. The Palestinian option that he offered could not compete with the pull to the left in Jewish socialist movements. One after the other, branches of Poalei Zion split, the great majority of the members turning their backs on Zionism and preferring the "great revolution."

The fact that Jews like Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kaminiev, Karl Radek, Rosa Luxembourg, Bela Kun and others were the leaders of worldwide revolutionary movements, concerned Ben Gurion. He regarded this phenomenon as an expression of national masochism, rootlessness and despair, inherent in the fact that Jews lived in alien countries. He and his colleagues in Palestine had, in fact, warned that the move to the left of the Zionist movement in the Diaspora would eventually impel many members to betray their Zionist beliefs. And, in the course of the less than two years

9. Z. Tzahor, "Controversy Between Palestinian Labour Parties on Recruitment to the Jewish Battalion" (Hebrew), *Katedra*, 4 (1977).

10. On Ben Gurion's attitude to Lenin, see D. Ben Gurion, *Zikhronot* (Memoirs) A (Tel Aviv, 1971), pp. 262-267.

of his mission to London, the leftist splinter groups of the party did undergo an ideological metamorphosis and large numbers of Jewish youth joined the Jewish organization of the Communist Party — the Yev-sektzia — and publicly expressed their regret at having once been affiliated with a Zionist movement.

Disillusioned at having failed to create a constructive immigration movement, even among those who remained loyal to Zionism, Ben Gurion urged his Party to recall him to Palestine. He returned in summer 1921, to take up his first important post, as Secretary of the newly-established Workers Fund, the Histadrut.¹¹ To his many subsequent encounters with young Jewish intellectuals and with the Jewish establishment in Western Europe and the United States, he brought memories of his early encounters with the Diaspora. He never abandoned the conviction that these sections of the Jewish public were not aware of the needs of the hour and that their leaders were preoccupied with local, internal problems and were engaged in intrigues and endless bickering over trivial matters.

In contrast to the close attention which he gave to some problems — the party, the Histadrut, Zionist diplomacy, etc. — Ben Gurion devoted scant attention to a methodical analysis of the problems of Diaspora Jewry and the significance of the Diaspora for the Jewish people. He accepted the generalized convictions prevalent among his contemporaries in the Palestine labour movement, i.e., that the Jews of Western Europe and the United States were the prisoners of materialism, entrapped in an accelerated process of assimilation, while the Jews of Eastern Europe were continuing their decadent ghetto heritage and lacked the strength to extricate themselves from their degrading plight.

Such gloomy conclusions should have discouraged him, but, like most of his comrades, Ben Gurion was a latent populist. He believed in inspiring leadership, in the impact of an elite social group, in the personal example. These convictions were of great personal significance for him; he had an almost mystic belief in his own mission as leader of the Jewish people and as their guide along the path to national independence.

But in the distressing condition of the Jewish people, as he saw it, this was not enough. The Jews of the Diaspora, those in the West, who worshipped the golden calf, those of Eastern Europe, who adhered to outdated traditions, and even the radicals who were attracted to socialist revolutionary movements — all were due for a profound shock. This would bring them to a recognition of the hopelessness of Diaspora life and would draw masses of Jews to Palestine.

Ben Gurion's unequivocal attitude to the Diaspora was based on his premonition of this catastrophe. He was burdened by this foresight long

11. Z. Tzahor, "The Histadrut — the Formative Period" (Hebrew dissertation) (Jerusalem, 1979), pp. 162-165.

before the Holocaust actually commenced.¹² He did not elaborate on the significance of the catastrophe, mainly because he was careful to confine his statements to the sphere of rationality. He does not appear to have perceived the dimensions of the tragedy, but thought more in terms of cultural upheaval and material ruin as a result of persecution and perhaps even of assimilation arising from a collaboration between the masses and the authorities.

Paradoxically enough, such a catastrophe presented an advantage to the radical Zionists who had always claimed that the place for Jews was Palestine, and whose beliefs were now vindicated. This explains the attitude of the leadership of the Zionist movement to the rise of the Nazi party to power in 1933. Although Ben Gurion never said so explicitly, one senses that he regarded it as the will of history.

The latter part of the 1920s brought a severe crisis to the Zionist movement. Immigration to Palestine was almost entirely halted. The economic crisis in Palestine provoked a wave of emigration, while the Arabs of Palestine organized and fomented unrest, culminating in the 1929 riots. The Zionist movement was split and there was a general sense of loss of direction.¹³ It was precisely at this period that anti-Semitism, which began to burgeon in Europe in the early 1930s, changed the face of the Zionist movement. A new wave of immigrants began to flow into Palestine, and predominant among them were German Jews who, until the rise of Nazism, had been remote from, or even hostile to, Zionism. They arrived with considerable financial assets and gave the Yishuv renewed impetus. The Nazi "assistance" to recovery of the Zionist movement appeared to derive from the logic inherent in radical Zionist theories. Thus, one can explain the journey of Haim Arlozorov, head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, to Germany to negotiate with the Nazis for the transfer of Jewish funds, and the plans for the emigrations of German Jews over a lengthy period, which stressed the need for selection and cautious planning to enable them to transfer property to Palestine.¹⁴

In retrospect, it appears that it was because of these convictions of Ben Gurion and his colleagues, (as of the entire Zionist movement) that insufficient attention was paid to the physical significance of the catastrophe. There was, indeed, a disturbing lack of proportion: to a large extent the significance of Hitlerism was assessed in the concrete context of the building of Palestine, at least until the outbreak of the World War.¹⁵

Ben Gurion, who was not in the habit of admitting his errors, never

12. Ben Gurion's letter to Chaim Weizmann, 26.10.33, *Zikhronot A*, pp. 673-675.

13. C. Weizmann, *Trial and Error* (N.Y., 1966), pp. 330-336.

14. Arlozorov plan for emigration of German Jewry, *Jüdische Rundschau* (25.5.33).

15. Arlozorov, while head of the Jewish Agency Political Department, believed that what was going on in Germany was less dangerous than what lay in store for US Jewry. See *Ketavim* (Writings), Vol. 6, p. 130.

dwelt in later years on his role as leader during the Holocaust. He apparently regarded this chapter in his career as one to be forgotten or glossed over. A quantitative examination of his activities in 1939-1945 reveals how extensively he dealt with internal party matters and with political and diplomatic struggles and how little with the problems of European Jews.¹⁶

It may be assumed that he was subsequently greatly troubled by this matter and an apologetic aspect is evident in his effort to prove that he did, in fact, try to rescue Jews and that only the shortsightedness of other leaders frustrated his efforts. Thus, for example, he said in 1957 that if his own opinion had prevailed in the controversy on the partition proposal formulated by the Peel Commission in 1937, a Jewish state would have then arisen. However small it might have been, it could have absorbed masses of European Jews and, thus, millions might have been saved.¹⁷

It is unlikely that Ben Gurion himself was convinced of the validity of this argument and, in fact, he did not often employ it. The bitter lesson of the Holocaust intensified his negative attitude to the Diaspora. His "Palestino-centricity" became increasingly aggressive; even he, who all his life had urged Jews to immigrate to escape catastrophe, had been incapable of envisaging the dimensions of the horror.

The trauma of the Holocaust had a strong impact on his policies as premier of Israel, extending beyond his attitude to Jews and to the Diaspora. He suffered then from a "Holocaust phobia" accompanied by a sense of importance. The Jewish people and the State of Israel were being persecuted physically: the strength of the State, surrounded as it was by powerful enemies, was limited, while the Jewish people had no power at all. Therefore, throughout his terms of office as premier, he strove to establish alliances with world powers. It was the concept of such an alliance which impelled him to join the British-French plot to seize the Suez Canal in 1956. This phobia also led Ben Gurion to decide to withdraw from Sinai after its occupation by Israel in 1956. It also explains his objections to the Six Day War in 1967.

Judaism and Palestine

Ben Gurion devoted considerable effort to fostering his image as a philosopher and spiritual authority. He claimed that the greatest personalities in history, and particularly in Jewish history — Moses, David, Solomon, Rashi, Maimonides — had combined in their personalities and actions the qualities of public and ideological-philosophical leadership. This accounts for his leaning to philosophy, his Biblical studies and his ostensibly inexplicable interest in the philosophy of religions. In order to delve into Greek philosophy, he studied ancient Greek; he published a

16. Z. Tzohar, "Ben Gurion Writes Autobiography" (Hebrew), *Keshet* (41, 1974).

17. Ben Gurion letter to Ben-Zion Katz, 1.9.57, BG Archives, File 1957.

book of essays on the Bible and studied Sanskrit so as to “understand” Buddhism.

In his relations with the Diaspora, as well, he tried to employ tools from the sphere of science and philosophy. There was an age old tradition which endowed the Diaspora with profound meaning in the annals of the Jewish people. To understand this approach required intellectual effort and challenge, and Ben Gurion’s basic hypothesis, which totally negated the Diaspora, did not easily stand up to it. His solution was simple: the study of Jewish history by non-Jews “was distorted in most cases by Christian and anti-Jewish trends which, deliberately or otherwise, influenced most of their conclusions.” But Jewish research was also untrustworthy: “Nor were Jewish scholars entirely free of tendencies, influences and inhibitions which have nothing to do with study of the truth.” In general, scholars of the Diaspora were incapable of proper understanding of the history of the Jewish people, because comprehension of the role of the Diaspora

calls for spiritual affinity and historical intuition, freedom of thought, independence of spirit and lack of prejudice and tendencies to attack or defend: and it is hard to find these qualities among non-Jewish scholars, or among Jewish scholars who are servants of two authorities, who have not known the flavour of living as free Jews in their independent country.¹⁸

The conclusion is unequivocal: a survey of the history of the Jewish people and of Jewish philosophy written by anyone other than a Zionist living in Palestine must be tendentious and uncomprehending. In this fashion Ben Gurion sweepingly dismissed any intellectual confrontation. From time to time, however, he was obliged to repeat his explanation why the Diaspora was only a transitory and negative stage in the history of the nation. The president of the Zionist Organization, Nahum Goldmann, who held Israeli nationality, once claimed that the presence of the Jewish people among the nations was not a tragic episode but a mission. In other words, there was a kind of “Jewish obligation” to live among the nations of the world and disseminate universal Jewish principles of morality and justice. As might have been anticipated, Ben Gurion negated this concept utterly. He argued that Goldmann was trying to revive the ideal of the “world state,” an idea which Ben Gurion regarded as a danger to the existence of the Jewish people who were already dependent on the existence of a sovereign state of Israel.¹⁹ The survival of the Jewish people in the Diaspora was possible only as long as the State of Israel had not been set up, since this survival was based on

the hope and belief implanted in them by the great prophets in the messianic vision of redemption and salvation, the vision of the Messianic era, when the scattered people would return to their land, to independence . . .

18. D. Ben Gurion, “On Zionism, the Nation and the State (Hebrew), *Hazut*, No. 1 (1953): 84.

19. Letter to Prof. Kurzweil, 9.7.61.

The redemption of Israel is the spiritual objective of the Jewish people. This, to Ben Gurion's mind, was the meaning of the messianic concept in Judaism.²⁰

Once redemption had arrived, the State of Israel was transformed into the sole expression of Jewish existence. Israel was the reflection of Jewish unity and unique traits, the source from which the people draw their heritage and spiritual qualities. The culture of the Diaspora was inspired by the heritage of the period preceding freedom and could express itself only as long as the hope of redemption was inherent in it. Once that hope had been fulfilled, the Diaspora culture was destined to wither away, its task completed.

Ben Gurion may have sensed that these arguments were insufficiently convincing. He therefore sought corroboration in the words of Jewish authorities who preached the Return to Zion. It is in this light that one should assess his cordial attitude to the leaders of the National Religious party, despite ideological and intellectual differences, and the "historic alliance" that he made with them. He also sought common ground with the leaders of the Orthodox movement in Palestine and met and corresponded with one of the most extreme personalities among them, Hazon Ish, to whom he made pilgrimages in Bnei Brak.

Ben Gurion (who himself had had a civil marriage ceremony, and did not observe kashrut or the Sabbath) was also on friendly terms with the first Chief Rabbi of Israel, Isaac Herzog. Over and over again he sought substantiation for his views in halakhic tradition. He said to Herzog: "All Judaism rests on *mizvot* and not on belief, like Christianity." Hence he tried to press the conclusion that love of the Holy land or belief in its sanctity alone were meaningless. Since Judaism was grounded on *mizvot* (practical injunctions) the most important act was the *mizvah* of settling in Israel — the deed rather than the thought or the prayer.²¹

Ben Gurion's search for authoritative corroboration led him, on the other hand, to the philosophy of Spinoza, the man who had been cast out by the Jewish people. He responded to queries on his affinity for the excommunicated philosopher by saying that "he was the greatest philosopher of mankind in general."²² Having defined Spinoza's greatness, Ben Gurion went on to say that, more than 300 years earlier, Spinoza had predicted the rebirth of the State of Israel, through which alone the Jewish people could return to its role as the chosen people.

Spinoza is the exception among Ben Gurion's heroes. The others are almost all the ancient heroes of the Biblical tales and of the annals of the people in its own land. Here, too, the emphasis is on a type of hero not usually accepted in Jewish tradition and sometimes alien to the spirit of

20. D. Ben Gurion, "Terms and Values" (Hebrew) *Hazut*, (1957): 10.

21. Letter to Rabbi Herzog, 20.10.53, BG Archives, File 1953.

22. D. Ben Gurion, "On Zionism, the Nation and the State," pp. 83-84.

the Biblical authors. Prominent among them are Jeroboam the Second, King of Israel who "did evil in the sight of the Lord" and Uzziah King of Judah.²³ In his historiography, Ben Gurion often writes admiringly about the judges Joshua and Gideon and their battles. His heroes are characterized by their external greatness: they are conquerors and diplomats and they aspire to political sovereignty, the expansion of borders and of conquest.

He often quoted Isaiah, Amos and Jeremiah and frequently stressed the phenomenal qualities of the small nation which had bestowed on the world a great spiritual heritage. But here, too, the source of greatness was the soil of the homeland and the profound and complete experience of drawing inspiration for the very source of its vitality, the Land of Israel.

The power of the people survived even after it lost independence but the Jewish people setting out for the Diaspora did not resemble the same people living in the Diaspora. The Diaspora altered their image and status not only from the political and national viewpoint but also from the cultural and spiritual aspect. The Diaspora narrowed the horizons of the people, chained their spirit. The well of creativity did not dry up nor did it dwindle, but it was confined to the four walls of the ghetto.²⁴

The assumption that the Jewish people dwelling in Israel was the source of vitality, the belief in the special role of Judaism, combined with the emphasis on the Biblical heroes, contempt for the Yiddish language — all of these are more than slightly reminiscent of semi-Canaanite ideology. In a letter to Professor Nathan Rothenstreich, Ben Gurion wrote that "the basis of the Jewish state was a leap over centuries and in the War of Independence we came close to the days of Joshua."²⁵ It appears that this leap was aimed at obliterating those centuries of gloomy, debilitating, degrading Diaspora life. The people had returned to their land, to sovereignty, to the source. The Diaspora had concluded its task.

Israel and the Zionist Establishment

In December, 1953, a meeting of the Zionist Executive was held in Jerusalem. Naturally, Ben Gurion was invited to attend, just as he had been for many years. But this time he turned down the invitation. From the early 50s to the end of his life, Ben Gurion manifested a demonstrative contempt for the organized Zionist movement. There were a number of personal and ideological reasons for this attitude.

Throughout his leadership, the basis for Ben Gurion's political strength was Palestine. Hence his rise to the first rank of the Zionist leadership had been slow and marked by setbacks, since the bulk of the electoral power, until the establishment of Israel, was concentrated in the Dias-

23. D. Ben Gurion, "Terms and Values," p. 11.

24. "On Zionism . . .," p. 81.

25. Ben Gurion's letter to Nathan Rothenstreich, 9.1.55, Ben Gurion Archives, 1957 file.

pora. The local organizations in various countries could boast of large scale frameworks and a high personal standard of leadership. Ben Gurion often felt helpless in his personal struggles with personalities within the Zionist movement, in his disputes with Nahum Sokolov, his almost violent controversy with Jabotinsky and his bitter and acrimonious clashes with Weizmann.²⁶ He was utterly convinced of the rightness of his actions but was obliged to give way because his base of power, the Palestinian labour movement, was limited. Even when his movement attained power within the Zionist leadership, in the early 30s, it never held a majority, and was forced to agree to a coalition with the participation of those same Diaspora leaders whom Ben Gurion both despised and envied. The Zionist movement, whose traditional leadership was regarded by Ben Gurion and his colleagues as "bourgeois," was suspicious of the radical and impetuous youngsters from Palestine, and accepted Ben Gurion's leadership reluctantly, constantly attempting to restrain him.²⁷

When Israel was established, the balance of power in the Zionist movement shifted. The potential resources of the Eastern European movement had been destroyed in the Holocaust. The movement was now entirely concentrated in the West and could be expected to extend financial, political and moral support to Israel. And here we must note the ideological factor in Ben Gurion's attitude to Zionism. The guideline for his activities was always constructivism, which found expression in his period of work as a labourer at Sejera in his early years in Palestine, in his leadership of the Histadrut and in the fostering of productive-consumer frameworks (as embodied in *Hevrat ha-Ovdim*). These projects, unparalleled throughout the world, which prepared the ground for a popular army, for labour settlements and for a pluralistic workers' party, were expressions of his constructivist approach and of his assumption that ideology was of no value unless it was put into practice. Words, political and social organizations, meetings and conferences were sterile, squandering money and strength and distracting attention from the true issue, which was the personal realization of ideology.

The same attitude held for the Zionist ideal. For Ben Gurion, Zionism meant Zion, and Zion must be won by practice and not in theory; the precondition for this was immigration. He decided to boycott the above-mentioned Zionist Executive meeting because he had proposed to the conference committee that they submit a resolution declaring the obligation of every member to immigrate. On this issue, Ben Gurion did not spare the feelings of the Zionist leaders: again and again he asked them what real difference there was between them and Jews who did not carry movement membership cards. The answers never satisfied him and he

26. Y. Gorni, *Shutafut u'Maavak* (Comradeship and Struggle) (Tel Aviv, 1976), pp. 160-206.

27. *Ibid.*

considered any Jew abroad who denoted himself a Zionist to be a hypocrite.

On the tenth anniversary of statehood, Ben Gurion wrote a comprehensive article entitled "Israel and the Diaspora" in which he summed up the role of Israel, presenting it as the antithesis of the Diaspora.²⁸ Through Biblical quotations and by questioning modern research conclusions he surveyed Jewish history from the Patriarchs through the Exodus to the establishment of the State. The central motif, as he saw it, was the vision of redemption, reflecting the main concept of the Diaspora in Judaism.

Those who do not regard the vision of messianic redemption as the sole focus of the people do not see the central goal of Jewish history and the cornerstone of the Jewish people.

He saw this redemption not as a vague yearning or an apocalyptic vision but as a messianic phenomenon. This secular messianism constituted a revolution, a revolution in a way of life, in culture and in language, occurring in an old-new land, the Land of Israel. This revolution was dependent on personal immigration to Palestine. This was the meaning of messianic redemption without which there could be no Jewish nation. It was the dream of becoming "a free people in our land" which enabled survival in the Diaspora. "Without the hope of messianic redemption and the profound spiritual affinity for the ancient homeland, the State of Israel could not have arisen." But once it was created, there was no longer a need for the hope of redemption and the Jews in the Diaspora had no justification for Jewish existence there. In his blunt fashion, Ben Gurion wrote: "Jews in the Diaspora as Jews are human debris."

The Zionist movement, by existing in the Diaspora concomitantly with the State of Israel, was an anachronism, and, moreover, caused harm. Since its leaders were Jews who lived their lives out in the Diaspora but wore Zionist laurels, it served as a negative example to many to delay their own immigration. Thus Zionism became an immoral movement which demanded of others what its own members did not fulfil in their own lives. In retrospect, it emerges that the existence of the Zionist movement strengthened the Diaspora and, hence, weakened the State of Israel.

Conclusion

David Ben Gurion fulfilled a vitally important personal role in the modern annals of the Jewish people. He stood at the centre of the events which led to the establishment of the State of Israel and his role in the network of ties between Israel and the Jews of the Diaspora was of great significance.

From his youth, he regarded himself as having been destined to lead

28. D. Ben Gurion, "Israel and the Diaspora" (Hebrew), *Government Yearbook* (1958).

the Jewish people along the path to national independence. This belief in his personal role and his unshakeable conviction of the necessity to create a sovereign base for the Jewish people in Palestine provided the powerful impetus for his rise to leadership.

The struggle for statehood demanded all of Ben Gurion's spiritual resources. Each delay or obstacle was his enemy. To this struggle he dedicated all his human resources and he demanded as much of others. To devote attention to the Diaspora, as a phenomenon of Jewish significance, appeared to him a deviation, since the sole objective should be the State. The function of the Diaspora was to stand at the disposal of the State, providing financial support and serving as a human reservoir in constant flux towards Israel. Hence, from the day that Israel was established the Diaspora was destined to disappear.

Ben Gurion's belief in his own mission and in the significance of Israel as the sole means of future Jewish survival was almost mystical. But without his political talents, these beliefs alone would not have sufficed to make him a leader. He also displayed political realism. His fundamentalist drives did not prevent him from engaging in pragmatic action which sometimes appeared to contradict his other activities. His attack on the Zionist movement, after the establishment of Israel, was calculated: the world Zionist movement was weak and its influence on Western Jews limited. Despite his forceful onslaught on the Zionist movement, he did not refrain from complimenting prestigious Jewish leaders of the American public,²⁹ and encouraged rich American Jews to contribute to the UJA. There was no contradiction therein: financial aid to Israel was a vital necessity, more useful than the Zionist verbiage of Jews who had no intention of immigrating. This was constructive activity directly supporting the building of the country in accordance with the best traditions of the Second Aliyah and, as he once said: "What is important to me is the deed. The deed alone determines history."³⁰

29. Ben Gurion's speech in honour of Jacob Blaustein, 23.8.50. In *American Jewish Yearbook*, Vol. 53, 1952 (N.Y. 1952), pp. 564-565.

30. Letter to Rabbi Herzog, 20.10.53.

The Religious Criminal

JEFFREY M. COHEN

A MOST UNSAVOURY CASE, INVOLVING AN allegedly very religious Jew who was found guilty of a particularly sordid type of crime, has recently rocked a British provincial Jewish community. Newspapers referred to the man's religious orientation, making great play of his having prayed before going into court and of the fact that he was a member of an ultra-Orthodox Jewish sect.

Inevitably, many people have asked how, indeed, one can equate such debased behaviour with a man supposed to be striving toward the opposite pole — away from earthly, physical excesses to the direction of heaven? Was his religion all a sham? Was it completely devoid of any meaning?

Such an explanation is unsatisfactory for, surely, a man who was a willing member of a vibrant, highly self-critical and disciplined sect, which brooked no compromise in religious behaviour, which expected every man, woman and child to live by the most exacting standards — in Synagogue attendance three times a day, in dress, separation of the sexes before marriage, compulsory attendance at daily *Shiurim* and so on — surely anyone who was not totally sincere in this situation could not have kept up the facade for over fifty years! He would have been discovered; he would have been unmasked and would have voluntarily moved out of that community.

Or was it just a mental aberration? Was it a psychological debility which suddenly manifested itself? Was the man, in effect, ill, not *compos mentis*? Alas, no, for the courts established his sanity and his degree of psychological responsibility beyond any doubt before they proceeded with the trial and sentence!

It would be an interesting, theoretical dilemma, if it were not so tragic in its practical ramifications and repercussions. But let us for a moment forget the specific case and address ourselves to the wider issue and problem: How do we explain the anomaly of a “religious criminal”?

We could not make so bold as to claim to be able to give an unequivocal answer to this problem, but we may discover a rationale by delineating two levels of religious consciousness — a deeper one and a more superficial one — and attempting to demonstrate thereby how, within the context of the more superficial level, such a hybrid as the religious criminal might emerge.

The first thing to clarify is the term “religious,” because it frequently befogs the issue. Being religious is a response to, and identification with, a

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fixed body of instruction, law and traditional values which we call *Torah*. It is not a vague empathy with a people's struggle and destiny, nor is it the adoption of some unintelligible ritualistic activities which commend themselves solely on the basis of their ethno-social cohesiveness. So, to be "religious" means to *identify with* a clearly definable and comprehensive system, to such an extent that the discipline of that system is not viewed as an external imperative, but rather as the natural, the only, course for one's behavior and emotional happiness.

In the first analysis, being "religious" involves knowledge, knowledge of a *Torah* which we affirm to have emanated from God. And it is in the context of variant human responses to knowledge that light on our central problem may be shed.

In a penetrating book by the social analyst Erich Fromm, entitled *To Have or To Be?* (Jonathan Cape, 1978), the author describes two modes of existence struggling for the spirit of mankind: the "having mode," which concentrates upon material possessions, power, and aggression, which beget greed, envy and violence, and the "being mode," which is based on love, on the pleasure of sharing and being at one with others.

When these competing attitudes are applied to learning or knowledge they are particularly significant. Fromm distinguishes two kinds of students — those in the *having* mode of existence and those in the *being* mode.

Students in the *having* mode will listen to a lecture, hearing the words and understanding their logical structure and meaning as best they can, to enable them to write down a full, almost verbatim, account of the lecture in their notebooks, so that later on they can memorize their notes and pass an examination. But the content does not become part of their own individual system of thought, enriching and widening it. Instead, they transform the words they hear into fixed clusters of thought, which they store up. The students and the contents of the lectures remain strangers to each other, except that each student has become the owner of a collection of statements made by somebody else. These are students in the *having* mode whose one aim is to hold onto what they "learned" either by entrusting it firmly to their memories or by carefully guarding their notes. They do not have to produce or create something new. In fact, the *having* type student would be disturbed by new theories about the subject, because they cast doubt on the reliability and value of their knowledge possessions.

The process of learning is totally different for students in the *being* mode of relatedness to the world . . . Such students will have thought beforehand about the problems the lectures will be dealing with, and have in mind certain questions and problems of their own. Instead of being passive receptacles of words and ideas, they listen, they hear, they *receive* and they *respond* in an active, productive way. What they listen to stimulates their own thinking process. New questions, ideas and perspectives arise in their minds. They do not simply acquire knowledge that they can take home and memorize. They are affected and changed by what they hear (pp. 28-29).

The lecturer's phraseology is, of itself, unimportant. The student's own mind and imagination has used it only for a springboard. This student is

in a *being*-relationship to what he absorbs. The ideas become his food, his nourishment, his very make-up.

Is not this the same with Torah knowledge and religious instruction? You can subject two children to the same religious environment and religious educational system. The “having mode” student may outstrip the “being mode” student in learning and in regurgitating the notes and facts. His prodigious memory may enable him to score full marks in the exam, having reproduced verbatim the “cluster of knowledge” provided by the teacher. But there could be a world of difference between the responses and effect of such lectures upon the two children. The *being* mode student might well have had his heart touched, his whole outlook on life and faith changed by contact with a single idea propounded by the teacher or embodied in the text of the Siddur or H̄umash. He may not, ironically, have been able to translate each word as well as his fellow “having mode” student. But which one has learned creatively, and which superficially?

It all boils down to the question of whether we *have* Torah or whether we *become* the Torah, its embodiment in thought and deed.

Hence the phenomenon of a rabbinic sage who is, nevertheless, devious, avaricious, unethical, the antithesis of all the qualities which Torah seeks to inculcate. Such a man *has* Torah, but has not *become* Torah. Yes, he can quote you chapter and verse, but he has not been truly changed by contact with it. He has not absorbed it into his being, only into his thinking. He has remained, all along, only “the owner” of a vast collection, but he has always been separate from it.

The ideal is succinctly summed up in three Biblical words: *Veyad'ata 'im levavekha*, “And you shall know *with* your heart” (Deut. 8:5) or, as the Rabbis were fond of expressing it: *Rahamana liyba' ba'ey* “God requires the heart.” *Knowing* his Torah is insufficient; it is *identifying* with it, *being* it, being affected by it throughout one's waking hours, absorbing it not just with one's brain, but through the vehicle of one's deep-seated emotions that is important.

So it happens that one may confront a situation where a person may have been brought up in a strictly religious, confined environment, but the psychological make-up of the particular individual gives him merely a “having mode” relationship to the system. He knows it all; he conforms, he even enjoys it (because he knows no other system), but, perhaps unknown to himself, he is not psychologically in a “being” relationship to it, through no fault of his own, through no lack of effort.

Would we brand such a person as non-religious, assuming that we were able to hypnotize him and discover the relatively superficial nature and extent of his outward commitment and degree of identification? Surely not, by the same token that we do not disparage a student who gains top marks on the basis of having memorized his notes verbatim. Would we deny him the title “student”? We would be laughed out of court, if we did!

So we have the situation, tragic as it is, wherein people, educated and reared in a religious system, adhering to it in good faith and yet because it is only *possessed* by them and not absorbed into them, are susceptible, at any moment of crisis or pressure in life, to act totally out of character with — if not totally in defiance of — the basic teachings with which they had lived since earliest childhood. It comes as a shock to them, as well as to others, to realise that, all along, the traditional teachings had existed merely as a “cluster of knowledge,” with no real anchor and no immersion into the psychological ethos of the individual concerned.

Only along these lines can we make sense of the anomaly of a religious criminal, one whose make-up has allowed him to enter merely into a *having-mode* relationship to his Torah teachings, never into the desired *being-mode*.

The Mission of Israel in a Nuclear Age

LEVI A. OLAN

MODERN MAN'S FRIGHTFUL DILEMMA ARISES

from two major revolutions taking place concurrently. One is the rapid development of science that is bringing us near the final nuclear holocaust; the other is the steady shift from theism to secularism. Historically, the implications of a change from one *Weltanschauung* to another is accompanied by disorder. This was true when the Renaissance replaced the Middle Ages and when the Enlightenment succeeded the Renaissance. These radical changes were not fatal to all human existence. The replacement of theism by secularism is occurring as sophisticated nuclear power is being rapidly developed. The latter is generally visible and acknowledged, while the former is more subtle and understood mostly by the theologians. Secularism is a more acceptable term than the classic word, atheism, which denies the existence of God. A secularist does not bother to do that. He generally belongs to a church or synagogue, and participates in the liturgy which is theistic. He lives his life, however, as if there were no God. The majority of the people of the world tip their hats to God as they would to an elderly lady, politely paying their respects.

Theism posits the view that the universe is the outflow of one ultimate reality, and that one universal will permeates nature, history, and morality. Man, in this view, is a rational creature endowed with freedom and potential creativity. These characteristics of his nature are a reflection of the Being of all beings, and the world in which he lives is orderly, intelligible, and rational. This view of the universe and of man constitutes the nature of the God-faith even though it is expressed in a variety of forms and bears the stamp of different theological formulations, which range from the classical one of the Bible to the neo-classical one of Whitehead. Common to all of them, however, is the belief that man is a significant being whose existence is endowed with purpose, and that he is a creature of cosmic worth, both as an individual as well as in his kinship with all other human beings. Theism thus affirms that human life is goal-directed and that fulfillment is achieved as man becomes completely rational, creative, free, and good. These characteristics are not a matter of caprice nor are they lost in subjectivity. They are an inseparable part of being, itself.

Secularism, which in practice is, as was noted atheism, posits a view of the universe as an accidental concatenation of atoms devoid of purpose or goal. Furthermore, despite its natural laws which operate efficiently and

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dependably, they are part of an absurd nothingness, *a tale told by an idiot*. Milton Steinberg compares such a world to “a madman (who) breathes, ingests, and secretes regularly. His body conforms to the normal rational pattern of all living things. Yet he is insane in that his actions are without intelligible objective and recognizable purpose.”¹

Secularists, like theists, differ among themselves in the formulation of their view of the universe, but the implications of their *Weltanschauung* are common to all of them. They view man as a thing among things, a by-product of a blind machine. Despite the fact that he is endowed with capacities to love, think, and show compassion, he is, nevertheless, a freak of the universe, or, as Bertrand Russell described him — the phosphorescence of slime. Sartre, speaking as an Existential atheist, announced that the world is logically absurd and concluded that man’s birth and death are absurdities. In the secularist view, man’s relationship to all other human beings is not one of kinship but of fierce separation since there is no one Being in whom they all participate. Expediency may temper violence and strife but cannot create a harmonious community of all mankind. Steinberg sums it up in these few words:

The human enterprise in a universe that has a fate but no destiny, becomes a pain-wrecked pilgrimage from one nowhere to another. The individual, an infinitesimal syllable in this idiot’s tale, must take such comfort as he can from the chance experience allowed him in the pointless interval of consciousness between a mysterious dawn and an equally mysterious dusk.²

The crisis which mankind fearfully suffers today is radically different from anything it has ever experienced in all of its history on earth. Two new elements are present today which seriously threaten the survival of the human species. One of these is man’s use of his enlarged brain to advance science and technology to produce the ultimate nuclear weapon capable of bringing to an end his own existence as well as to all life on earth. The other is the replacement of theism by secularism. For the first time, men have left their God not for other gods but for no god at all. This, says T.S. Eliot, has never happened before. In his secular pursuits, man has shaped his view of the world in scientific terms which have led him to phenomenal success. Unfortunately, and unexpectedly, they have also led him to a secularism which has eradicated everything beyond the secular, beyond what science and mathematical logic can validate. Thus, man finds himself living in a crisis which, in Whitehead’s words, is a *foreground with no background*.

It is legitimate to believe that man can reason his way toward an ethics that will resist the final nuclear disaster. Hudson Hoagland, a former president of the American Academy of Science, writes: “I hope that a secular religion — one of ultimate concern — can be found which will acquire

1. M. Steinberg, *A Believing Jew*, (N.Y., 1951) p. 37.

2. Ibid., p. 38.

loyalty to his species.”³ Professor Stephen Toulmin of the University of Chicago suggests that “Ethics proves the reason for choosing the right course, religion helps put our hearts into it.”⁴ A scientist and philosopher feel free to use religion as a secular phenomenon. The Supreme Court of the United States recently ruled that the claim of a conscientious objector to war on religious grounds is valid even if he denies the existence of a supreme Being.⁵ The court in this case legitimizes secular humanism as religion.

Every age answers the religious question in terms of its own culture. Primitive man answered it with a program of animism, totemism, fetishism, and taboo. The ancients had their Pantheon which mirrored the life style of the Greeks. Classical theism, as expressed in the Hebrew Bible, reflects faith in a God who is supernatural, omnipotent and omniscient. The modern protestation against this classical role of God in nature and history does not deny his existence. In most instances it represents a rejection of a particular theistic view common to a different cultural era. History records several reformulations of man’s view of God. The Biblical Prophets did not reject Yahweh when they radically altered the Priestly view of him. Thier own view, however, is also rooted in classical theology which is alien today in our post-modern culture. The existence of a supernatural being who can either cause a Holocaust or prevent it is unacceptable to a mind dominated by modern science. The neo-classical theism propounded by the Process thinkers who follow the philosophy of Whitehead and Hartshorne is undoubtedly not the final view of God. The future will look back upon it as a step forward in the ongoing process of history.

Man cannot be said to lose faith when the current formula no longer informs his life. The religious response to the meaning of human existence must be intelligible within the culture to which it addresses itself. Religion disappears as an active phenomenon when it fails to heed the demands of cultural development.⁶

Secular humanists today feed upon the moral heritage which is an integral part of the theistic *Weltanschauung*. Although they reject that world view they formally applaud the virtue of self-sacrifice on behalf of a greater and distant good. Tomorrow, their sons, facing the complex and perplexing issues of their own day, will continue to call upon reason to resolve them. The culture in which they will make their moral decisions will be secularist, reducing the virtue of self-sacrifice to a senseless whim in an absurd world. Their grandchildren, confronted with colossal crisis, social and physical, which will call for unprecedented self-sacrifice will ask Professor Toulmin’s limited question — why should I be moral at all? In the twenties, Walter Lippmann recognized the dilemma of the secularist view of life:

3. H. Hoagland, *Reflections on Science in Human Affairs* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 56.

4. S. Toulmin, *An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics* (Cambridge, 1950), p. 219.

5. U.S. Supreme Court Reports, 26L ed. 2nd. Walsh vs. U.S., June 15, 1970.

6. B. B. Malenowski, *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, vol. IV, p. 621.

Each ideal, (he wrote) is supreme within a sphere of its own. There is no point of reference outside of which he can determine the relative value of competing ideas . . . his impulses are no longer part of one attitude toward life, his ideals no longer in one hierarchy under one lordly ideal.⁷

Historically, the popular response to a prediction of an imminent doomsday is, as Sinclair Lewis wrote when Hitler was coming to power: "It Can't Happen Here." In the sixth century B.C.E., Jeremiah prophesied the fall of Judah to which the people responded — it can't happen here because God will protect Jerusalem where the Holy Temple stands. It did happen and Judah was conquered by the Babylonians and only the ruins of the Temple remained.

The present threat of a final holocaust of all life on earth is readily dismissed by most people who reason that no nation would dare to begin it, knowing that retaliation would be immediate and totally devastating. Despite this rational confidence, the multiplication of nuclear weapons is proceeding at a very rapid pace. As these words are being written the United States is depriving the poor, the aged, and needy children in order to build the largest military power in all of its history. The Russians have responded immediately with a military program greater than ours. The nuclear armament race is now at full speed and is proliferating to smaller nations all over the world. Fear of neighbor has become the foundation of our confidence that it cannot happen here. Yet, we are afraid to bring into our conscious awareness what we feel in our subconscious — that it really can happen here.

Through the use of sophisticated science and technology man has produced miracles which have enriched life beyond his wildest dreams. It has also created deadly weapons capable of destroying all life on earth. It is surely fitting to assume that the mind which could devise all of these great wonders can devise a formula which will prevent the disappearance of all life on earth. Distinguished scientists like Hoagland, philosophers like Toulmin and, we may add, Hans Jonas of the New School of Social Research, recognize that science, philosophy, and reason at their best cannot resolve the present crisis for human survival. They agree upon the need to call upon another element in addition, i.e., religion. They are secularists and reject traditional theism.

Their view of the universe reflects the Enlightenment period of modern history. They ignore the post-modern world that began with the fission of the atom. This revealed a wholly new *Weltanschauung* in which reality begins not with substance, but, rather, with self-enfolding fellow creatures, as well as the infinite whole in which we are somehow included as one. The *ONE* is compelled by experience which is relational and monistic at one and the same time. Infinitude is an inseparable part of the finite. The value of human existence, then, lies beyond ourselves. In this view, reality, comprised of ourselves, others and the whole, is the sense of

7. W. Lippmann, *Preface to Morals* (N.Y., 1929), p. 111.

deity, or, in Whitehead's words, "the intuition of holiness" which is the foundation of religion. The reality of God is inescapable so long as we experience that whole of which we are a part and which we trust. Schubert Ogden defines it concisely:

God is the very meaning of *reality* when this world is defined in terms of our basic confidence in the significance of life and the kind of questions and answers such confidence makes possible.⁸

A Midrash relates that Moses went down to earth to find out what happened to the Torah which he had received at Sinai. He entered the academy where Rabbi Akiba was explaining to the students the meaning of the Torah, but he was unable to follow the complicated hermeneutics which the Rabbi was presenting. He felt himself a stranger and began to leave, when he suddenly heard Rabbi Akiba say: "This is the Law given to Moses at Sinai."⁹ He realized that Rabbi Akiba's world, however strange it might seem, was the proper offshoot and descendent of what he, Moses, had wrought at Sinai. This Rabbinic story testifies to the recognition that the Torah tradition would undoubtedly have disappeared if it had not been critically appropriated by each new generation in terms of its own historical situation. There never has been, and there never can be, a traditional theism because the change in metaphysical schemes causes the form of the theistic image to change.

The Scriptural tradition (writes Galloway) is the only constant in the situation. But the matter of Scripture becomes a living word only when interpreted by people in their own situation. There is no revealed metaphysics. There is no single metaphysics of Theism.¹⁰

The word religion is used today to describe a great variety of phenomena beyond the traditional faith in God and adherence to his will. Sinnott offers a very broad meaning for it.

Any ideal to which man is loyal and which furnishes motive power for his life may be called a religion. Communism has become such for millions. Humanism, paying reverence to nothing higher than man, is a religion for many.¹¹

Albert Einstein used the word religion for a "cosmic sense. The individual feels the individual's destiny, as an imprisonment, and seeks to experience the totality of experience, the totality of existence as a unity, full of existence."¹² The word religion today is applied to many human experiences unrelated to God. Yet, latent in all ideas of God there is a philosophical concept of him as the embodiment of ideal ends, the truth that underlies and verifies all truths. John Dewey, philosopher and humanist,

8. S. Ogden, *The Reality of God* (N.Y. 1963), p. 29.

9. *Men*. 29b.

10. A.D. Galloway, "A God I Can Talk To," in *God, Secularization, and History*, ed., E.T. Lane (California, 1974), p. 114.

11. E.W. Sinnott, *Two Roads to Truth* (N.Y., 1953), p. 30.

12. A.A. Einstein, *A Cosmic Religion* (N.Y., 1931), p. 48.

believed that the “*idea of God, as an idea per se, is one of latent possibilities unified through imaginative realization and projection.*”¹³

We return now to a further consideration of the nuclear crisis which threatens the destruction of all life on our planet. Scientists and philosophers affirm that man's use of empirical-rational epistemology can discover the formula to prevent the final holocaust. Some of them, as was noted above, assert that the element of religion must be added to provide the motive power to move men to act passionately in putting into practice what the mind has devised. What they are calling for is not theology but psychology. The question which they fail to answer is the one Toulmin calls a limiting question — why should there be a world at all? This really asks what is the meaning of human existence? and cannot be answered by either science or reason. Whatever definitions of religion are offered, its prime and only function is to answer the question of the meaning of human existence.

It is at this point, (says Professor Will. A. Irwin) that the Hebrew thinkers have come into their own. Israel's greatest achievement was Monotheism. It was an achievement that transformed subsequent history . . . With that danger always implicit in superlatives, one may raise the question whether any other single contribution from whatever source since human culture emerged from the stone ages has the far reaching effect upon history that Israel in this regard has exerted.¹⁴

The Universe is Life, Thought, Spirit, and Unity. These, in essence, are one and are what the Jew proclaims when he pronounces the watchword of his faith: “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.” In a profound sense this is what the fission of the atom revealed.

Scholars generally agree that monotheism developed in Jewish history and reached its highest point with the Hebrew Prophets. Important as is the declaration of the one and only God, of equal if not greater significance is his ethical character which was most clearly described by Deutero-Isaiah. The basic faith of Israel, to this very day, is rooted in Ethical Monotheism. Micah spoke most directly to this: “He has told you, O man, what is good, / And what the Lord requires of you: / Only to do justice / and to love goodness, / And to walk modestly with your God.”¹⁵

A century before the atom was opened and revealed that ultimate reality is relational and monistic, and that no thing and no person exists alone, Hermann Cohen wrote: “The individual attains his highest dignity in his union with mankind; and he is important only so far as he contributes to the evolution of society.”¹⁶ Man's highly developed mind can understand the awesome significance of the nuclear threat to human existence. For the first time in human history, however, he is confronted with the responsibility of advancing his own evolution to the next step

13. J. Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven, 1934), pp. 134 ff.

14. W.A. Irwin, *The Old Testament: Keystone of Human Culture* (N.Y., 1952), p. 21.

15. Micah 6:8.

16. H. Cohen, *Begriff des Religion*, pp. 402-04.

which may be conscience, love of neighbor, or goodness. It may be said, then, that the survival of the human species rests upon a universal acceptance of the Prophetic teaching of Ethical Monotheism.

The Prophet charged Israel with its role in history: "I will also make you a light to the nations, / That MY salvation may reach the ends of the earth."¹⁷ Israel must survive as a unique and distinct people to be an *Am Kadosh*, a Holy people, and a *Mamlekheth Kohanim*, a kingdom of priests. The Rabbis developed an elaborate Halakhah with precise regulations and laws in order that Israel would always be different from all the nations so that it might bring all the nations to the worship of the One God. It was necessary for the priest and leader of the nations to preserve his identity.

In their opinion, (writes Lauterbach) the dietary laws and the peculiar customs were the purest safeguards of the Jewish identity and most conducive for the preservation of the distinctive religious character of the Jewish people . . . Nobody can deny that these ancient Jewish teachers accomplished their purpose. By their Halakhic regulations they preserved the Jewish people and through it the heritage of the Prophets, Judaism.¹⁸ (Lauterbach concludes his essay thus): And we today, whose task it is to continue the work of the Prophets and of the ancient teachers of Judaism likewise realize, that in order to carry out our mission, it is absolutely necessary that we preserve our Jewish religious individuality. We must keep ourselves religiously separate from the other people and be an *Am Kadosh*, a holy nation. Thus alone can we accomplish our *mission* and bring nigh the time when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea.¹⁹

In this most critical hour of human history Jews must recapture their Prophetic role of a covenanted community, fiercely passionate in its witness to Ethical Monotheism. It is true that the paramount concern of world Jewry today may be its own survival in a world which only a few decades ago experienced Auschwitz. The common slogans today are identity, the security of the State of Israel, and defense against anti-Semitism. What is rarely heard is the traditional belief of the mission of Israel. The realistic fact is that in the face of a nuclear holocaust which threatens all life on earth, including that of the Jew, now is the time for the Jew to revive his historic role and call all the nations to give reality to the Prophetic faith of Ethical Monotheism. It is a realistic *Weltanschauung* which includes every human being in the face of the present fragmentation into classes, races and political ideologies.

The worldly wise will readily dismiss this as a romantic fantasy which is irrelevant and, if attempted, must fail. If it does fail, the certain alternative is the final holocaust. It is better to hearken to the sages of old: "It is not incumbent upon you to complete the job, but you are not free from beginning it."

17. Isaiah 49:6.

18. J.Z. Lauterbach, "The Ethics of the Halakah," in *Rabbinic Essays* (Cincinnati, 1951), p.294.

19. Ibid., p. 298.

Judaism and Process Philosophy

WILLIAM E. KAUFMAN

"NOT THE GOD OF THE PHILOSOPHERS, BUT the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,"¹ wrote the seventeenth century French philosopher Pascal, following his acute, intense mystical experience. To Pascal, the God of religion and the God of the philosophers were incommensurable. The God of religion was personal, the God of the philosophers impersonal; the former was concrete, the latter abstract. To Pascal, the antithesis was absolute.

But is Pascal's dichotomy correct? Perhaps it is only the God of *some* philosophers that cannot be reconciled with the God of religion. Whiteheadian process philosophy, represented most cogently in our time by Charles Hartshorne, Whitehead's chief disciple, involves an attempt to show that the authentic God of the philosophers is also the proper object of worship for religion. The task of Hartshorne's philosophical theology is precisely the formulation of a synthesis of the God of Judeo-Christian religion and the God of philosophy.

The purpose of this essay is to explain Hartshorne's "process" notion and its relevance to Judaism, and to evaluate whether or not Hartshorne's conception of Divinity successfully reconciles the God of western religion and the God of philosophy.

I

Charles Hartshorne has been the Ashbel Smith Professor Philosophy at the University of Texas in Austin since 1963,² and his most important works, which began to appear already a decade earlier, reveal his major preoccupation: the articulation of a tenable conception of God. Hartshorne applies logical analysis to the *religious* idea of God; it is his firm conviction that reason leads us to a conception of a personal God. He writes:

The common saying "the God of philosophy is a quite different thing from the God of religion" is now antiquated, or at least, must be given a partly new meaning; since philosophy, in a long list of its modern and especially recent representatives, has for reasons of its own criteria of intelligibil-

1. *Pascal's Pensées*, with an English translation, brief notes and introduction by H.F. Stewart, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1950), p. 363.

2. Hartshorne earned his B.A. at Haverford College in 1917, his M.A. at Harvard in 1921 and his Ph.D. at Harvard in 1923. He also studied at the Universities of Freiburg and Marburg in Germany. He taught at Harvard, University of Chicago and Emory University before joining the faculty of the University of Texas. I am grateful to Professor Hartshorne for his clarification to me of various aspects of his philosophy.

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ity made the great transition from a conception of God as devoid of relativity and *becoming* to the conception of Him as in His full actuality the supreme relativity and *becoming*, the supreme object of social relationships and interactions — though not, for all that, without an aspect of eternity, necessity, absoluteness and relativity.³

It is precisely this notion of a God of process, or becoming, who is the supreme subject of social relationships and interactions, that renders Hartshorne's philosophy interesting in terms of its relevance to Judaism and Jewish theology. The major motif of Biblical and Rabbinic conceptions of God is that of a personal Being who enters into real relations with His creatures. This implies that God is a being whose versatility of becoming is unlimited and whose sensitive responsiveness extends to all individuals. It is a dynamic conception of God, a notion of a Deity who is moved and affected by what happens in the world and who reacts accordingly.

The late Jewish theologian, A. J. Heschel, contrasts the dynamic Judaic prophetic idea of God (who is concerned and involved in human affairs and who actually "becomes" by reacting to man's deeds with feeling and pathos) with the static concept of Deity which had its origin in Greek classical philosophy. Explaining this "static" concept, Heschel says:

The Eleatics taught that whatever exists is unchangeable. The ontological view was very soon put to use to determine the nature of God. Xenophanes, Anaxagoras, Plato and Aristotle followed in much the same line. The principle that mutability cannot be attributed to God is thus an ontological dogma, and as such, it has become the common property of religious philosophers.

It is easy to see how on the basis of the ontological view of the Eleatics there emerged a static conception of God. According to Greek thinking, impassivity and immobility are characteristic of the divine.⁴

In contrast to the Greek Eleatic view, the Judaic prophetic view envisages God as "concerned with man and . . . related to His people. The basic feature of the divine *pathos* is God's transcendental attention to man."⁵

Heschel has thus adroitly described the contrast between the static Greek Eleatic view of Divine immutability and the dynamic Hebraic prophet concept of Divine pathos and concern. But he does not offer a sustained philosophical defense of the Hebraic dynamic view.

It is at this point that Hartshorne's process philosophy is crucial, for what he does is to develop a philosophical argument to demonstrate that the dynamic notion of a becoming God is philosophically and rationally superior to the Eleatic concept of immutable Divinity.

3. Charles Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process* (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1971), p. 23.

4. Abraham J. Heschel, *Between God and Man*, edited and introduced by Fritz A. Rothschild (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 121.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 123, 124.

II

The crux of Hartshorne's argument involves what he calls "the logic of perfection." Hartshorne is a rationalist; at the early age of seventeen, he reminisces, "after reading Emerson's Essays, I made up my mind to trust reason to the end."⁶ He explains that a basic conviction of all his writing is expressed in the word "logic" — "the ultimate concepts have a rational structure, lucid, intellectually beautiful"⁷ and *the* ultimate concept, for him, is the notion of God, which he considers "the only adequate organizing principle of our life and thought."⁸

A key question thus arises. "God" properly denotes the object of worship. But, Hartshorne asks, "can a worshipful Deity be the object of rational analysis or demonstration?"⁹ His way of answering this question shows him to be a superior dialectician. He makes use of a principle referred to by the philosopher Morris Cohen as the "Law of Polarity." According to this law, Hartshorne explains,

ultimate contraries are correlatives, mutually interdependent, so that nothing real can be described by the wholly one-sided assertion of simplicity, being, actuality and the like, each in a pure form, devoid and independent of complexity, becoming, potentiality and related contraries.¹⁰

Now, the classical Thomistic concept of God as *actus purus* — "pure act" — implied a notion of Divine perfection as purely simple, actualized and complete; wholly nonrelative. In contrast, Hartshorne, following Whitehead, argues that perfection is not compromised by richness of experience. Divine perfection need not be synonymous, as Aquinas thought, with simplicity. In fact, Hartshorne maintains, becoming or process — implying that something can be *added* to the Divine experience, that the Deity is a growing God — is a more inclusive category than being. Accordingly, Hartshorne utilizes the law of polarity to develop what he calls a "dipolar" or "neoclassical" notion of God:

In accordance with this view, God is the union of supreme actuality and supreme potentiality, supreme activity and supreme passivity, supreme being and supreme becoming, the most strictly absolute and the most universally relative of all entities, actual or possible.¹¹

But isn't such a double predication contradictory? Hartshorne's answer is that "there is no law of logic against attributing contrasting predicates to the same individual, provided they apply to diverse aspects of this

6. Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (LaSalle, Illinois: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1926), p. viii.

7. *Ibid.*, p. ix.

8. *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 4.

10. Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese, eds., *Philosophers Speak of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p.2.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

individual.”¹² Thus, his philosophical theology is essentially a double aspect theory for God on which he develops his answer to how a concept can do justice to the reality of God.

Here again, there are two aspects of God to be considered: the concrete and the abstract. No concept can do justice to God’s concrete actuality. The entire actual God whom we confront in worship — the supreme concrete reality — is a mystery that transcends all our concepts. However, the term “God” stands not only for the supreme concrete reality but also for the supreme abstract principal of Divinity. It is this abstract aspect of Divinity that is open to our conceptual strivings. Surely, Hartshorne writes, “God is infinitely more than divine love, as a definable concept, an abstraction.”¹³ No essence, he contends, can possibly capture the entire actual God — the “Thou” whom we confront in worship.

What we call His essence or His attribute of perfection is the common denominator of God loving this world . . . One may admit the impenetrable divine mystery but believe also in the unrivalled lucidity of the divine essence as an abstract aspect of the mystery . . . that God stands for the supreme concrete reality does not prevent the word from standing also for the supreme abstract principle.¹⁴

The supreme abstract principle uniquely identifying the Deity is, for Hartshorne, the attribute of perfection. When we assert that God is perfect we are saying that He can be worshipped without incongruity by every individual. He then asks:

But what is worship? It has been very accurately defined. To worship X is to “love” X “with all one’s heart and all one’s mind and all one’s soul and all one’s strength.” Perfection is the character which X must have to make sense out of this.¹⁵

The Divine perfection, then, refers to that unique aspect of the Deity which renders Him the Being most worthy of worship. Now, unlike Aquinas, who conceived of God’s perfection as full and complete realization, of value, Hartshorne’s logic of perfection does not render God devoid of potentiality. On the contrary, this logic of perfection is based on the concept that God’s being can be enriched by human values. To conceive of Deity as complete and totally actualized fails to make sense of the act of worship. If in worship we seek the greater glory of God, this implies that God is capable of being enriched by human values. By the “Divine perfection,” then, Hartshorne means the Divine inclusion of all values, actual and potential.

But what about disvalue? How does he deal with the problem of evil? This problem arises if God is conceived of as both perfectly good and omnipotent — intending the good and capable of preventing all evil.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 15.

13. *The Logic of Perfection*, p. 4.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 5.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Hartshorne's answer to the problem is to qualify God's omnipotence. He conceives of God as the supreme power but not as possessing "a monopoly of power."¹⁶ Human beings, God's creatures, possess freedom and there are elements of chance, chaos and indeterminacy in all events. They are the price that we pay for creativity.

In fact, the key concept in Hartshorne's philosophy is the notion of creativity. What he is attempting to do is to harmonize God's creativity with that of His creatures. For this reason, he rejects determinism and unqualified Divine omnipotence. Human action involves a creative leap beyond anything made inevitable or predictable by casual conditions.

The creative act is influenced by its conditions, and requires them, but it cannot (I wish to argue) be required or precisely determined by them — much less, even, than an electronic event according to the Uncertainty Principle. This aspect of creativity is what the determinist overlooks or denies . . . If becoming does not create new quality and quantity, new determinateness, then, we argue, it creates nothing, and nothing every really becomes.¹⁷

Hartshorne's logic of perfection, therefore, denotes real becoming and novelty both in the universe and the inner life of God. His philosophical theology is thus a cogent philosophical development of the Jewish theological principle enunciated in the *Siddur*: "In His goodness He reneweth continually each day the work of Creation."¹⁸

III

It is now time to evaluate whether or not Hartshorne's philosophical theology successfully reconciles the God of religion with the God of the philosophers. The problem with his philosophical theology lies in the effort to combine both conceptual lucidity and a recognition of the transcendent mystery of God, for, as we have seen, he locates the mystery in the concrete actuality of God to which no concept can do justice. But he is so assiduous in describing the abstract aspect of God to the last detail that he seems to undermine the real transcendence of God. On this basis, the American existentialist philosopher, John Wild, has criticized Hartshorne's philosophical theology.

We are faced with a real transcendence which looms above our finite categories. This is what I miss in Professor Hartshorne's analysis. We will never gain wisdom by running the concept of God through a calculating machine. It is insight we need here, not formal calculations based on what we already know. We do not know enough.¹⁹

16. Ibid., p. 44.

17. Ibid., pp. 164, 165.

18. *Silverman Prayer Book for Sabbaths and Festivals*, p. 91.

19. *Philosophical Interrogations*, edited by Sydney and Beatrice Rome (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winson), p. 162. See also William E. Kaufman, *The Relation of Man to the World in the Philosophy of John Wild*, (unpublished doctoral dissertation), chapter five, for an analysis of John Wild's concept of transcendence.

A similar point is made by Buber, in reply to a question concerning whether the effect of man on God necessarily means a change in God:

But is it really so incomprehensible that our concepts shatter when they are applied to God, and that we nonetheless must use them in order to talk about our relation to Him. Because I point to the effect that the pure relation exercises on man, may it be for that reason demanded of me that, in order to be illuminating, I discuss its effect on God, something about which I know nothing and can know nothing.²⁰

In reply to these comments, Hartshorne would say that if we are to use concepts to understand the nature of God, we have a theological obligation to seek as much lucidity as we possibly can. But, in his quest for lucidity, Hartshorne is in danger of exceeding the limits of Judaic theological modesty as expressed in the Biblical verse in which God says to Moses, "Thou canst not see My face, for man shall not see Me and live."²¹ The Biblical commentator, J.H. Hertz, notes:

Many interpreters deduce from this passage the teaching that no living being can see God's face, i.e., penetrate His external essence. It is only from the *rearward* that we can know Him. Even as a ship sails though the waters of the ocean and leaves its wake behind, so God may be known by His Divine footprints in human history, by His traces in the human soul.²²

We may say, therefore, that Hartshorne's attempt to reconcile the God of religion and the God of philosophy requires more recognition of the dimension of the real transcendence of God. Nevertheless, his process philosophy does succeed in pointing the way to a new Jewish process theology in the future. While the uniquely *Jewish* element would require more emphasis on Divine transcendence, a synthesis of Judaism and process philosophy can, and should, be achieved. This essay constitutes a prolegomenon to such a synthesis. The common theme of Jewish theology and process philosophy is clearly adumbrated in the closing words of the *Alenu* prayer: "And it has been foretold: The Lord shall be King over all the earth, on that day the Lord shall be One, and His name One."²³ The very Unity of God, if we take these words seriously, is a dynamic one — a unity in process, a striving of God to be one with His universe. In this vein, A.J. Heschel wrote: "Unity of God is power for unity of God with all things. He is one in Himself and striving to be one with the world."²⁴

The conception of God striving to *become* one with His world is the locus where Judaism and process philosophy meet and the foundation for their future synthesis in a Jewish process theology in the making.

20. *Philosophical Interrogations*, p. 88.

21. Exodus 33:20.

22. *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, edited by Dr. J.H. Hertz, second edition (London: Soncino Press, 1962), p. 363.

23. *Silverman Prayer Book*, p. 37.

24. *Between God and Man* p. 107.

Non-Observance and Jewish Law

SOLOMON B. FREEHOF

THE LATE JOSEPH LOOKSTEIN COINED THE phrase, “non-observant Orthodox.” On page 384 of Volume 30 of JUDAISM, Robert Gordis makes a keen comment on that phrase and says that even those who consider themselves “observant Orthodox” include a large number who are only partially observant and who would certainly not accept the basic tenets of Orthodox doctrine if they knew it.

That there is a large area of non-observance in modern Jewish life is well known. Aside from our personal impressions of the situation, the rabbinic literature itself gives ample evidence of it. Isaac Halevi Herzog, the late Chief Rabbi of Israel, opposed conversion of Gentiles because when the proselytes pledged to observe the *mizvos*, they could not be relied upon, since Jews themselves ignore the commandments. He said (*Hekhal Yizhok*, page 106b): “Unfortunately, in our days, the situation is so wild and disorderly that Jews who according to the Law should be counted as sinners are in large numbers leaders of congregations and national leaders . . . Why should he (the Gentile) observe the *mizvos* when so many Jews do not observe them?”

This widespread neglect of the commandments has been, to a great extent, influenced by modern social conditions, primarily the breakup of the ghetto. When the Jewish community was no longer walled off and isolated, Jewish storekeepers, now having a Gentile clientele, simply had to violate the Sabbath and also had to sell non-kosher food. Also, modern democracies, with just and equal laws, encouraged the use of the civil legal system by Jews, and this led to the virtual disappearance of the Jewish system of rabbinical courts. The companionship of Jewish boys and girls with Gentile boys and girls in public schools and in universities naturally led to a marked increase in mixed marriages.

Yet, while the present social conditions have led to a widespread neglect of Jewish traditional law, it would be a mistake to look upon non-observance as exclusively a modern phenomenon. There is ample evidence that the non-observance of the law, to a varying degree, of course, has been a perpetual phenomenon in Jewish life. Sampson Morpurgo (1681–1740), in his *Shemesh Zedakah* (#61), discusses the question of shaving among the Jews of his time and moves on to an evaluation of the general observance of the commandments in his day. He says: “Any intelligent man knows of his own knowledge that most of the commandments are neglected by us since we are sunk among the Gentiles; our holy ances-

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tors pretended not to see it." Farther back, in the thirteenth century, Moses of Coucy, in his travel through Spain, found a great many mixed marriages there (*Semag*, Negative Commandments, end of #112). It is also noticed that frequently, after the statement of a prohibition, Isserles will say: "It is the custom to permit this." (See *Yore Deah* 113, 114, 123, etc.) In fact, Zvi Hirsh Chayes, in his *Darkhei Horoah*, deals with non-observance as a widespread and regular phenomenon and, at the beginning of the book, discusses what should be the proper approach of the legal decisors in dealing with it.

Yet the legal authorities dealt with this non-observance in a variety of ways. Sometimes the Talmudic principle is invoked that it is better not to rebuke people so their violation of the law does not become willful, as it would be if they were told that they were sinning and yet continued to sin. Sometimes the rabbis would simply ignore the violation and avoid comment, realizing that there was nothing useful to be said. They emulate the example of Rabbi Johanan b. Zaccai who said: "Woe unto me if I speak and woe unto me if I do not speak" (*Mishnah Kelim* 17:16).

Considering the widespread history of non-observance of the law, we must come to the conclusion that it is not merely a negative phenomenon. It has been a positive social force which has been crucial in the development of the law. Hence it becomes important in every age to study popular non-observance, its extent and its reasons. One might well invert the saying, "*Minhag Yisroel Torah hi*" and hold it to be a historical fact that what the people do not observe has an influence on the *halakhah*.

There are specific questions that should be asked about present-day non-observance of the law. How widespread is it? Is it more noticeable in one department of the law or in another, in one land or another? The fact that it exists to so large an extent may well argue an eventual change in Jewish law. Non-observance should, therefore, be measured as precisely as possible.

But the task is a difficult one. How can we approach it? We may begin with our general impression of the people we know, children of Orthodox homes, relatives, cousins, second cousins, etc. How much do they observe and what is the basis of their personal selectivity in the matter? Such impressions are bound, of course, to be sketchy and incomplete. A sociologist would think at once of questionnaires, but it is certain that these would not help very much. People will not answer questionnaires frankly; too many embarrassing factors are involved. How, then, can we find out the degree of modern non-observance which, as we have said, has always been a vital factor in Jewish religious history?

I suggest a form of statistical study which, as far as I know, has not been followed, namely, a statistical, comparative study of the responsa literature from one generation to another and from one country to another. Suppose that a numerical study were made, for example, comparing an Orthodox German volume of Responsa with a contemporaneous Galician

one. We would see the difference between the two as to how many questions in how many fields are asked and which questions are not asked in one but are asked in another. These figures might reveal the difference of religious life between the two Jewries, German and Galician. Thus, for example, Sholom Mordecai Schwadron of Galicia, in the past generation, has three hundred and fifty-two Responsa in his volumes (*Maharsham*) on questions of *Hoshen Mishpot* dealing with debts, wills, purchases and sales, etc. His contemporary in Germany, David Hoffman, in *Melamed L'hoel*, has not even a dozen questions on these *Hoshen Mishpot* problems! This statistical difference reveals at once that the Jews of Germany had already abandoned almost completely the rabbinical courts in business disputes. The same non-observance of Jewish civil law has occurred in the United States, as evidenced by the paucity of real business questions in the Responsa of Moses Feinstein. When people have abandoned observance of certain laws, when these laws no longer play a part in their lives, they will ask no questions from a rabbinical authority on those matters.

One might take up such a statistical study by themes as well as by countries, noticing the disappearance of some questions and the multiplication of others. The Responsa would then constitute the gateway to our knowledge of the true state of the observance of the commandments.

We began with reference to our honored friend, the late Joseph Lookstein. We can close with the fact that Bar Ilan University in Tel Aviv, to which he had devoted so much of his energy, is concerned now with a great effort of computerizing the entire Responsa literature. It may be that by the use of the computer such a study of the Responsa as I have suggested may be greatly facilitated. Whatever the means, the result will lead us to a more precise knowledge of the degree of observance among Jews of all ages. By that token, it will help pinpoint the influence that non-observance will have on the Jewish law of tomorrow.

A Typology of Biblical Women

FREDERICK E. GREENSPAHN

FEW SUBJECTS HAVE RECEIVED SUCH CONSISTENT attention as the role of women in the Bible; the efforts to dissect, analyze, justify, and attack the biblical treatment seem endless.¹ As in many such debates, it is not always clear whether the Bible is being studied objectively or used to justify previously reached conclusions. In this case, however, it is not simply feminism which is being defended or attacked. A rather subtle, if traditional, form of anti-Judaism has been discerned in much of recent feminist interpretation, particularly as it contrasts the wicked (patriarchal) Old Testament with the enlightened ideals of Jesus.² Given all the hidden and the not-so-hidden agendas as well as the prominence that the issue has and that it will undoubtedly continue to receive, it is appropriate to return to the Bible itself and seek to understand better its own view of woman.

Before proceeding, it would be well to point out that much which we take for granted is wrong, and there are ample indications that the Bible's women may not conform to our preconceptions. Deborah and Esther are examples who often figure prominently in lists of Israelite heroines, whether compiled by those seeking to show that the Bible does offer positive female role models or by their opponents who are appalled at the paucity of such types.³ Yet how does Deborah respond to imminent danger? She calls Barak to lead the army, accompanying him only at his insistence. As for Esther, it is hard to understand the attraction for feminists and traditionalists alike of a woman who achieves prominence by sleeping with her prospective boss (Esther 2:12-14).

Eve and Vashti are surely among those most likely to be held up as biblical women at their worst; but here again things are not what they seem. Although rabbinic tradition made Vashti a paradigm of wickedness,⁴ in the Bible itself what is her flaw? She refuses to take orders from her probably drunken husband who sees her as another object to control and display. Though her fate offers a warning of what can happen

1. Contemporary concerns were manifest already in Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible* (New York: European Publishing Company, 1895).

2. J. Plaskow, "Christian Feminism and Anti-Judaism," *Cross Currents* 28 (1978): 306-9.

3. P. Tribble speaks of Deborah, Huldah, and Ruth (as well as Mary and Martha in the New Testament) as "tokens" ("Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," *JAAR* 41 [1973]: 30).

4. Hence her title "*vashti harisha'ah* (e.g., *B. Meg.* 10b, 12b).

to such women, Vashti is a militant feminist of the first order.⁵ Similarly, as recent literature has increasingly recognized, the biblical Eve is nowhere near as sinful as she was to become in the eyes of later interpreters.⁶ Her dialogue with the snake is carefully handled so that she can weigh the risks and dangers involved, and she decides to eat only after determining that the tree is edible, attractive, and useful — all of which is correct.⁷ Indeed, one might reasonably argue that Eve's actions, however disobedient, were ultimately beneficial in that they contributed to the human species' development of moral or intellectual autonomy.⁸ By contrast, Adam is rather passive and unimpressive, neither tempted nor seduced; Eve merely puts the food in front of him, and he eats.⁹

Other women who are often regarded negatively also merit a closer look. Lot's daughters' motivation is to find some way, no matter how shameful under normal circumstances, to maintain their father's line;¹⁰ that Lot is drunk at the time offers an important insight into the Bible's view of how men and women react at moments of perceived emergency. Tamar's goal in disguising herself as a prostitute is similarly positive. And Job's wife, in advising her husband to curse God, has what she undoubtedly regarded as his best interest at heart; we ought to bear in mind the fate of ancient widows before condemning her for encouraging blasphemy.¹¹

Obviously these stories are complex and their characters merit closer scrutiny than can be offered here. The point is simply to remember that later legend and popular culture have tended to oversimplify the biblical characterizations. We must, therefore, look closely at the texts themselves before proclaiming the Bible's attitude towards an issue of such deep contemporary concern.

Given the diverse forms of literature comprised by the biblical corpus and its non-theoretical orientation, any generalizations as to so pervasive a subject as woman must be abstracted from the available evidence. Con-

5. This interpretation is supported by the book's mockery of Ahasuerus (cf. M. Samuels, *Certain People of the Book* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1858], pp. 3-29). M. Gendler even compares Vashti to Mordecai ("The Restoration of Vashti," *The Jewish Woman*, ed. E. Koltun [New York: Schocken, 1976], pp. 242, 245-6).

6. Cf. J.M. Higgins, "The Myth of Eve: The Temptress," *JAAR* 44 (1976) :639-47.

7. P. Tribble, "Depatriarchalizing," p. 40. The snake's "deceit" is limited to telling the truth: they did not die from eating the fruit, but their eyes were opened so that they could discern good and evil like god(s) (Gen. 3:2-3, 22-3).

8. Cf. P. Bird, "Images of Women in the Old Testament," *Religion and Sexism*, ed. R.R. Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), pp. 74-5. For an alternative view, cf. R. Gordis, "The Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Old Testament and the Qumran Scrolls," *JBL* 76 (1957) :123-38.

9. P. Tribble, "Depatriarchalizing," p. 40; the development of the theme of women as seducing men into sin is traced by B.P. Prusak, "Woman: Seductive Siren and Source of Sin" in *Religion and Sexism*, pp. 89-116 and J.M. Higgins, "The Myth of Eve."

10. So, too, the daughters of Zelophehad, a poor but often cited case of the Bible's tendency towards sexual egalitarianism (cf. P. Bird, "Images of Women," pp. 53 and 81n. 31).

11. J.H. Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), pp. 123-31.

structing a typology will permit us to organize such a diverse collection of data as the Bible provides in order to point up certain commonalities which run through legal, poetic, and narrative texts.¹² A typology is, by its very nature, an abstraction, so there must be no inference that such a list ever existed. Under these circumstances, one's objectivity is obviously suspect — a problem that may be academic to all treatments of this issue. One can only hope that these tentative observations will lay the ground work for future discussion.

It must be admitted that the Bible does not always treat women as equals or in ways that we regard as positive. When Leviticus enumerates the scale of values to be used with regard to vows, the pattern remains consistent for all age levels: men are regularly worth about twice as much as women (Lev. 27:2-7).¹³ In the realm of ritual, the mother of a newborn girl is unclean for twice as long as if she had borne a boy (Lev. 12:1-5).¹⁴ In narrative texts, a similar conclusion emerges from the well-known humiliation ascribed to those who were killed by women.¹⁵ The reasons for these attitudes and practices need not concern us; we are not trying to justify or attack the Bible but simply to note the presence of a differential and to recognize on which side the greater value lies.

A slightly different, but equally discomfiting, perspective for many moderns is the number of biblical women who are a daughter or a wife, but rarely an independent human being. A woman's vow must be endorsed by her father or husband (Num. 30:3-6). Compensation for seducing a virgin is paid to her father (Exod. 22:14, Deut. 22:2-9). Adultery is clearly conceived of as a crime against the husband.¹⁶ That women can be understood only in relationship to men is most conspicuous in Proverbs where one encounters two types: the good woman — a good wife who is a source of pride and confidence to her husband (e.g., Prov. 12:4, 18:22) and the bad woman, who can be a nag or an embarrassment, a prostitute or an adulteress (e.g., Prov. 9:13, 21:19).¹⁷ Either way, good or

12. Thus Max Weber points out that the purpose of such ideal types is so that they may be then compared "with empirical reality in order to establish its divergences or similarities, to describe them with the most unambiguously intelligible concepts, and to understand and explain them casually." (*Max Weber on the Methodology of the Social Sciences*, ed., E.A. Shills and H.A. Finch [Glencoe: Free Press, 1949], pp. 43; cf. also pp. 90-91).

13. This proportion seems comparable to that obtaining in other ancient Near-Eastern cultures, cf. G.J. Wenham, "Leviticus 27:2-8 and the Price of Slaves," *ZAW* 90 (1978): 265.

14. Similar differentials are attested in other cultures, cf. D.I. Macht, "A Scientific Appreciation of Leviticus 12:1-5," *JBL* 52 (1933): 254-5. The explanation that female babies would eventually also bear children and thus require a greater period of purification is not convincing (cf. J.R. Porter, *Leviticus* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976] p. 95 and J.H. Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed*, pp. 176-7).

15. Cf. Judg. 4:9, 9:54.

16. The ordeal of the suspected adulteress (Num. 5:11-15) and the bloody sheet (Deut. 22:13-21) illustrates the same point; no such treatment of a male is even remotely conceivable.

17. For the metaphysical projection of this perspective, present also in Qoh. 7:26 and 9:9, see below.

bad, it is the woman's effect on men that is deemed important. Even the vaunted woman of valor is so-designated primarily as a result of her wifely and maternal accomplishments.¹⁸

Defining women in terms of their relationship to men is especially conspicuous in the patriarchal stories.¹⁹ Sarah, for example, is encountered first as a possible object of adultery, then as a sister, next as the rather shrewish protector of her own offspring and, finally, as a good housewife when Abraham stops some passing angels with the suggestion that they "rest under the tree and *I* will get a piece of bread to satisfy you" (Gen. 18:3-5). His reaction to their acceptance of this invitation is revealing: "Abraham hurried to the tent, to Sarah, and said, 'Hurry, knead three measures of fine meal to make cakes'" (v.6). Wifely virtues are noticeable also in the interaction of Rachel and Leah where the feminine ideal is split: Leah lacked beauty and, so, sought consolation in her ability to reproduce; Rachel was attractive but lacked fertility and, therefore, felt unloved. Even the book of Ruth, which offers the most independent and central of biblical females, is devoted to the themes of barrenness and fertility and the goal of finding a husband.

This tendency towards androcentrism need not be entirely negative. Hannah, Rizpah, and Sisera's mother demonstrate maternal love, but their virtue falls within a gender-defined role, an observation which could be extended to those recently prominent texts in which feminine imagery is applied to God.²¹ To be sure, the existence of such passages shows that these roles cannot have been regarded as too derogatory; still, God the Mother is one who stays home, mends clothes, and takes care of the children while God the Father rules and wages war. The same thing might also be said of other females who are depicted positively. Jephtha's daughter certainly evokes an image of strength and commitment, but she is never named, only defined. Similarly, Rahab and the females in *The Song of Songs*, whose roles transcend those normally assigned to women, are nonetheless both defined in terms of sexual behavior. There can be no doubt that sexual stereotypes do exist within biblical literature and that they have frequently (but not invariably) negative implications for any moderns.

Having acknowledged the presence of such texts, one must also recognize the existence of other categories without which any survey would

18. Note also, however, her independence in the purchase of land and support of charity (Prov. 31:16, 20).

19. Despite modern efforts to speak of patriarchs *and* matriarchs, the texts themselves hardly justify ascribing to these women the same status as their husbands.

20. Cf. D.F. Rauber, "Literary Values in the Bible: The Book of Ruth," *JBL* 89 (1970): 29-31.

21. Cf. P. Tribble, "Depatriarchalizing," pp. 32-5. The fact that, for the prophets, childbearing always centers on the pain of labor suggests that the maternal role was not conceived of as entirely positive (see also Gen. 3:16). The possibility of God's having both parental and maternal facets continued after the biblical period, cf. IQH 9:35-6; similar bisexual imagery is found outside of Israel where it is applied to human rulers (e.g., *KAI* 24:10-11, 26:2-3).

be dishonest by way of omission. The first is that of the women who are missing from the Bible. These women are not treated badly by the ancient authors because they are not treated at all. The subject most commonly arises with the question, "Where did Cain's wife come from?" The Bible, of course, has no answer nor, apparently, any interest in that issue. Under this heading one might include those genealogies which enumerate only sons or add, in passing, a note that after the birth of the prime heir (invariably male) the progenitor "begat sons and daughters."²²

Because we are dealing here with characters who are not present, it is easy to overlook their absence. Consider the revelation at Sinai in anticipation of which:

The LORD told Moses, "Go to the people and sanctify them today and tomorrow . . . that they be ready for the third day . . . when the LORD will descend onto Mount Sinai before all the people . . . so Moses descended from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people (Exod. 19:10-14).

The word translated "people" is *‘am*; and it is to the *‘am* — all the *‘am* — that God is obviously going to appear. Only at the end of this preparation does it become clear who the *‘am* really is when Moses

said to the people, "Get ready for the third day; do not go near a woman" (Exod. 19:15).

‘Am yisra’el is all male. A similar suggestion has been made for the Ten Commandments where the repeated masculine imperative seems to be a grammatical convention until in the last commandment we are told, "Do not covet your neighbor's wife" (Exod. 20:17).²³ We slip into the assumption that such passages include women because the words "you" and "people" are neutral in English or maybe because of our own predilections; but in both cases the Bible seems to have men and only men in mind. One might include in this context the ritual of circumcision, not to mention all the biblical imagery based on it. Here, too, women are not excluded on principle; they are simply ignored.

There are countless narratives one could incorporate under this heading. We are familiar with Abraham's impressive obedience to God's every command, whether it be to pick up and move or to kill his only son (*yehidkha*). Of course, Isaac is not his only son, and so Abraham's impending loss, no matter how great, is not as awesome as the text would have us think; but he is Sarah's only child, and her absence from both of these narratives speak volumes about her importance. Those concubines, possession of which constitutes authority for some aspiring male politician (e.g., 2 Sam, 16:20-22, 1 Kgs. 2:13-25), are not sex objects in the Bible (no mat-

22. E.g., Gen. 5:4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 26, 30.

23. P. Bird, "Images of Women," p. 50. Robert Gordis has drawn my attention to the fact that *‘am* includes only the male population of Sodom (Gen. 19:4), suggesting that only males were considered when seeking those righteous on whose behalf that sinful city might be saved in Gen. 18:23-32.

ter what their role in real life); they are symbols of power, like a crown or a signet. The Bible has no interest in them as people. When Lot offers his daughters to the rowdy mob, when the Levite sends his concubine out into the night, when Dinah is raped or the women of Shiloh are abducted to solve Benjamin's population problem — all these acts have narrative implications for the males involved, but the women's fate is ignored.²⁴

If many women are presented by the Bible as virtual ciphers, there is an ample number who are not. We have already noted that Eve's role is more important and impressive than Adam's; other women's actions also determine the course of events. Rebecca might serve as a paradigm for these.²⁵ In some respects she appears to conform to the patriarchal type; at one point she even seems to be a replacement for Isaac's lost mother (Gen. 24:67). But Rebecca is not another Sarah. From the first time we meet her she demonstrates initiative, anticipating the servant's request for water and suggesting that he spend the night at her home where her consent is sought before she returns with him.²⁶ With Isaac, too, she takes an active role. In contrast to Sarah, however, Rebecca need not defend her child against the claims of another mother; both Esau and Jacob are hers. Rather, it is the future of her people which she will determine. Isaac's blindness is appropriate; every step along the way it is Rebecca who is in control. She overhears Isaac's instructions to Esau, cooks the food, prepares the disguise, and accepts responsibility for its consequence. Both Isaac and Jacob are playing out the drama for which Rebecca has written the script. Finally, when Esau discovers what has transpired and plans to kill his brother, it is Rebecca who is able to avoid the catastrophe. Esther comes to play a similar role once she emerges from passivity and uses her femininity to save her people.²⁷

There are several important males whose accounts are structured around females. One thinks in this regard of the early Moses who is saved through the action of women.²⁸ A similar case could be made with regard

24. The apparent absence of women from the Israelite priesthood, in contrast to the situation in other ancient near eastern cultures, should not be included in this list but understood as a function of the role that women played in their respective cults and the nature of Israelite religion which had no place for such priestesses (cf. Bird, "Images of Women," p. 68). Women are attested to in other official positions, as the well-known cases of Huldah and the woman from Endor make clear.

25. Cf. C.G. Allen, "Who Was Rebekah? 'On Me Be the Curse, My Son!'" in Rita M. Gross, ed., *Beyond Androcentrism, New Essays on Women and Religion* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), pp. 196-211.

26. The comparison with Nuzi is suggestive, although it should be noted that Rebecca's consent to the marriage itself is not explicitly sought; cf. T.L. Thompson, "The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives" (BZAW 133 [1947]:251-2) and J. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University, 1975), pp. 77-8.

27. One could argue that this is precisely how she got to be queen (see above n.4).

28. Cf. J. Ackerman, "The Literary Context of the Moses Birth Story" in *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, eds., K.R.R. Gros Louis, J. Ackerman, T.S. Warshaw (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), p. 95 and P. Tribble, "Depatriarchalizing," p. 34.

to Samson, where the narratives fall under the headings of the three women with whom he deals.²⁹ Finally, the David narratives betray a periodization of sorts, each represented by the wife suitable for that part of his life — Michal during his service to Saul, Abigail for the desert, Bathsheba in Jerusalem, and Abishag during his old age.³⁰ Solomon's accomplishments, too, are reflected by women. His rise to power is the result of Bathsheba's action. His wisdom is demonstrated by the case of the two prostitutes and his ability to deal with the Queen of Sheba.³¹ Finally, his downfall is ascribed to the influence of his foreign wives (1 Kgs. 11:1-13).

Solomon is not the only man whose problems are ascribed to females. Women are constantly getting biblical men into difficulty. Although Deuteronomy warns against intermarriage with Canaanites of either sex (Deut. 7:1-4), it is quite regularly foreign daughters who are leading Israelite men astray.³² In addition to Solomon, one could add the encounter at Shittim,³³ the case of Zimri and Cozbi, Delilah, and the foreign wives in the time of Nehemiah and Ezra. Athaliah and Potiphar's wife should also be mentioned in this context³⁴ but the best exemplar is Jezebel who is at once wicked, foreign, and idolatrous. What is less frequently mentioned is the correlative of this type — the passive, submissive, indecisive man. Ahab, after all, sulks when he cannot obtain Naboth's vineyard, leaving Jezebel dumbfounded at his impotence. It is Adam and Eve once again.

What emerges, then, is not simply woman symbolizing evil but, rather, woman as powerful — whether for good or ill. Jezebel is no less in control than was Rebecca; and Ahab, like Isaac, is simply unable to direct the course of events. If some of these women are morally questionable, that trait is shared with a fair number of biblical men. Dynamic women may be manipulative,³⁵ but that need not make them wicked, especially not from the biblical point of view.

The power implicitly ascribed to women by the Bible is, at its base, morally neutral. Its positive potential emerges most clearly in the realm of

29. J. Blenkinsopp, "Some Notes on the Saga of Samson and the Heroic Milieu," *Scripture* 11 (1959) :83.

30. Cf. M. Samuel, *Certain People of the Book*, pp. 186-240. Note that each is, or comes to be, associated with another man (Saul, Nabal, Uriah, Adonijah).

31. Significantly, wisdom itself is feminine, on which see below.

32. This may have been a result of the Bible's androcentric point of view, but it has important narrative implications.

33. Num. 25:1; note that here again it is "the people" who whored with the Moabite women.

34. Although she poses no threat to anyone but herself, it is striking that the only time we hear of Lot's wife is to report a misdeed. This appears also to be the source of many feminine images for Israel, viz., her adultery and prostitution, which constitute a favorite prophetic theme. The more "positive" theme of the faithful bride and abandoned widow belong to the androcentric category noted previously.

35. Cf. B.F. Batto's observation that "women in Mari could attain great power, often although not always unofficially" (*Studies on Women at Mari* [Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974] p. 73).

wisdom. We have already seen how Solomon's wisdom is demonstrated in his interaction with the prostitutes and the Queen of Sheba. Elsewhere there are wise women from Tekoa and Abel (2 Sam. 14:1-20, 20:14-22)³⁶ as well as Lemuel's mother who is credited with having taught her son the wisdom included in the book of Proverbs (Prov. 31:1). We might also recall that it was a woman who first provided the human race with wisdom³⁷ and that in many cultures the snake, often a symbol of wisdom, is feminine.³⁸ But the prime example of a wise female is wisdom itself, personified as a woman, really *the* good woman in contrast to the dangerous and seductive folly (e.g., Prov. 7:1-5). Here, two female images are juxtaposed — one positive, the other negative, but both capable of controlling men. To be sure, the imagery is androcentric. It would be folly to pretend that the Bible is otherwise. But let us not ignore the male who stands at the center of these images, for he is weak and vulnerable. He can be blind like Isaac, drunk like Lot, or, merely a sex object, as Jacob rather ironically becomes (Gen. 30:14-15). Male and female are correlative categories and cannot be treated in isolation from each other.

In order to assess the biblical attitude, we have attempted to categorize the Bible's women — both real and figurative — into three groups. The first, in which womanhood is treated negatively, is probably the most widely known. It embraces what many regard as an outright misogynous view along with a tendency to see women in terms of males — as sisters, daughters, and wives. Those women who are ignored constitute the second group, although its importance is somewhat obscured by the fact that these women are most often left out of the biblical account. These categories do not, however, exhaust the Bible's female cast. Just as many women are depicted primarily in terms of males, so, too, have we seen men whose narratives are structured according to females. There are even a number of women who demonstrate power over men, whether for good or for ill.

While few would argue that the Bible derives from a patriarchal society, it does contain positive as well as negative material about women. Moreover, it reflects a male society that was at least somewhat insecure and which tended to hypostatize women into positions of power, effectively if not officially. If the Bible is to become a tool in the debate over female equality, then it would seem best that it be read carefully and understood in terms of what it actually says before it is used to defend or attack those values which interpreters choose for it.

36. C.V. Camp regards these as evidence for the early openness of Israelite society ("The Wise Women of 2 Samuel: A Role Model for Women in Early Israel," *CBQ* 43 [1971]:25-6).

37. A similar view is, of course, attested in the Gilgamesh Epic where Enkidu gains wisdom after his week with the harlot (I iv. 29, *ANET*: 75).

38. M. Stone, *When God Was a Woman* (New York: Dial Press, 1976), pp. 199-211. For the symbolic connotations of the snake cf. T.H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 35-6.

A Legend Concerning the Origins of the Shema

REUVEN HAMMER

A THEME FOUND FREQUENTLY IN THE MID-rash is the origin of the various prayers which form such an integral part of the daily life of the Jew. Thus we find stories concerning the various sections of the Grace after Meals¹ and the daily Amidah prayer.² One can hardly call these historical or critical studies of the origin of these prayers. Rather, they are attempts at connecting well known and popularly used prayers with important historical events or personalities, thereby adding a new dimension to the prayer as well as providing a good opportunity for telling a story and for emphasizing values which the Sages wished to impart.

One of the most interesting and artistic midrashim of this genre is a legend concerning the origins of the *Shema*, the daily recital of passages from the Bible which was considered an act of loyalty to God. Although the tale, found in Section 31 of the *Sifre*, an early Tannaitic midrash to the book of Deuteronomy, is anonymous, the language and forms of interpretation lead one to suspect that it may be from the work of Rabbi Akiba, the magnificent teacher who lived during the last half of the first century and the beginning of the second century C.E. According to the Talmud,³ the *Sifre* was based on his interpretations, and although this may not be true of the entire work as it stands today, it probably does apply to this section. Akiba was a man of the people, an ignorant peasant in his youth, who never lost touch with the common man, and in this legend we see how he — or whoever composed it — succeeded in creating a meaning for the *Shema* which would connect it not only to the majestic but abstract theological act of the acceptance of God's kingship, for which Akiba eventually gave his life,⁴ but to the human story of a father and his anxiety for his family, a microcosm of the eternal concern of the Jewish people for its sons and daughters.

1. B. Ber. 48b.

2. B. Ber. 26b.; *Sifre* Deuteronomy 343; Midrash *Tehillim* 17:4; L. Finkelstein, *New Light from the Prophets* (New York, 1969), p. 37ff; L. Finkelstein, "The Development of the Amida," *JQR*, XVI (1925-26): 1-32, 127-170.

3. B. *Sanh.* 86a; B. *Kid.* 49a. Anonymous statements of the *Sifre* are ascribed to Akiba's student, R. Shimon.

4. B. Ber. 61b.

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The legend is a verbal tapestry which weaves together a number of verses from Genesis concerning Jacob and his family. It begins with a discussion of the use of one word — Israel — in the opening verse of the *Shema*, but leads to an explanation of the entire act of proclaiming the *Shema* twice daily. Although it is not the only rabbinic legend concerning this prayer,⁵ it is the most human and meaningful of them.

To facilitate the understanding of the technique involved, it should be pointed out that the midrash uses one basic method of interpreting verses throughout: demonstrating that the surface meaning cannot be the correct one, and then offering a different meaning which is suitable to the overall theme of the story, in this instance Jacob's concern for the integrity of his family. Note, too, the fitness with which the legend is brought full circle, with a final line which echoes the very beginning in language and in theme. This midrash tells a story, discusses the origins of the *Shema*, invests it with new meaning, stresses several themes central to rabbinic Judaism and, incidentally, disposes of several rather troublesome verses from Genesis at the same time. Not a trivial accomplishment.⁶ The text of the midrash is presented below in capital letters with the writer's comments and explanations interspersed.

"HEAR O ISRAEL, THE LORD IS OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE," (Deut. 6:14). WHY WAS THIS SAID? The assumption is made that the "Israel" referred to here is the man, Jacob known as Israel, and not the nation. This leads to the question: why is this verse addressed to him rather than to one of the other patriarchs, Abraham or Isaac? He was, after all, the last of them. To strengthen the point another verse is quoted which is also addressed to him. Similarly it says, "SPEAK TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL," (Ex. 25:12). IT DOES NOT SAY "SPEAK TO THE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM," OR "SPEAK TO THE CHILDREN OF ISAAC," BUT "SPEAK TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL." The answer is offered that this and other references to the children of Israel, as well as the recitation of the *Shema* itself, are Jacob's reward for his constant concern for the uprightness of his children. OUR FATHER JACOB MERITED THAT SUCH DECLARATIONS BE DIRECTED TO HIS CHILDREN BECAUSE ALL HIS DAYS HE HAD EXPRESSED THE FEAR: WOE UNTO ME LEST THOSE WHO ARE UNWORTHY ISSUE FROM ME AS THEY ISSUED FROM MY FATHERS . . .

Meditating on the history of his family, Jacob recalls that each prior patriarch begot a son who represented the antithesis of the ideals of his

5. See also Deut. *Rabbah*, ed. Lieberman (Jerusalem), pp. 67-68.

6. E. Mihaly, "A Rabbinic Defense of the Election of Israel," (HUCA xxxv, 1964, pp. 103-144), analyses Piska 12 of *Sifre* Deuteronomy and demonstrates that ascribing the election exclusively to Jacob and, through him, to his children only, rather than through Abraham, was an anti-Christian polemic asserting the chosenness of Israel. Thus, the emphasis here upon the perfection of Jacob's progeny has a polemical basis. I accept this and assume it, but, as in so many cases, more than one purpose is served by a midrash. This paper emphasises the human side of the legend, the story of Jacob as concerned father.

father. ISHMAEL ISSUED FROM ABRAHAM, ESAU FROM ISAAC, and he expresses the hope or, better, the determination, that this will not be the case with his children. BUT THOSE UNWORTHY WILL NOT DESCEND FROM ME AS THEY DID FROM MY FATHERS. Since this idea is not expressed explicitly in the Biblical stories of Jacob, it is deduced from an interpretation of something he said. THUS IT SAYS, "JACOB VOWED A VOW SAYING . . ." (Gen. 28:20). Following his dream of the angels ascending and descending the stairway to heaven at the top of which stands God Himself, Jacob awakes and makes a vow. This vow, in which the fleeing, pursued, frightened Jacob requests God's protection, has always presented a problem because it seems to say that Jacob is putting a condition on his worship of God. He will worship Him *if* God takes proper care of him while he is away! Obviously, this is not an acceptable stance for the patriarch to have taken and it is rejected indignantly. WOULD IT EVER HAVE OCCURRED TO JACOB TO SAY: IF HE . . . GIVES ME BREAD TO EAT AND CLOTHING TO WEAR . . . THE LORD SHALL BE MY GOD! WHAT THEN DOES THE SCRIPTURE MEAN, "THE LORD SHALL BE MY GOD?" (JACOB REQUESTED): LET HIM PLACE HIS NAME UPON ME SO THAT AT NO TIME WILL THOSE UNWORTHY ISSUE FROM ME. Jacob's words, "the Lord shall be my God," are taken as part of his list of requests. Stressing the word *my*, we deduce that Jacob wants God to do something, to establish a special relationship with him which will not permit any of Jacob's children to turn out like his brother Esau or like his uncle Ishmael. The Hebrew word for "unworthy," *pesolet*, indicates chaff, garbage or anything else which is virtually worthless.

IN THIS CONNECTION IT SAYS, "WHILE ISRAEL STAYED IN THAT LAND, REUBEN WENT AND LAY WITH BILHAH, HIS FATHER'S CONCUBINE, AND ISRAEL HEARD . . ." (Gen. 35:22). Continuing the saga of Jacob's concern, we are reminded how distressed he was when Reuben, his first born son, broke all the rules of morality by having sexual relations with his father's concubine. ". . . and Israel heard . . ." an enigmatic phrase in the Bible, is understood to indicate that he was so disturbed because this indicated to him that exactly what he had feared was happening. The family tragedy was being repeated. WHEN JACOB HEARD ABOUT IT HE WAS SHAKEN. HE SAID, "WOE UNTO ME THAT ONE UNWORTHY MAY HAVE APPEARED AMONG MY CHILDREN . . ." However, evidently his prior plea to God had helped, for even though Reuben had sinned, as might any human being, he had also repented. The value of repentance in the theology of Judaism cannot be overestimated. A whole day, the holiest of the year, Yom Kippur, is devoted to it, as are countless prayers, stories and norms. HOWEVER, THE HOLY ONE INFORMED HIM THAT REUBEN HAD REPENTED. This, too, is inferred from a verse. AS IT SAYS, "NOW THE SONS OF JACOB WERE TWELVE IN NUMBER," (Gen. 35:22).

DID WE NOT KNOW THAT THERE WERE TWELVE? It is too obvious for the Torah to have bothered to state. RATHER IT INDICATES THAT THE HOLY ONE ANNOUNCED THAT REUBEN HAD REPENTED. Jacob still had twelve sons, twelve whom he could pridefully call his own. Further proof that Reuben repented can be found in his conduct. One of the well known ways of repenting is through fasting. WE ARE (ALSO) TAUGHT THAT REUBEN FASTED ALL HIS DAYS, AS IT SAYS, "THEN THEY SAT DOWN TO A MEAL," (Gen. 37:25). WOULD WE HAVE EVER THOUGHT THAT THE BROTHERS WOULD SIT DOWN TO EAT WITHOUT THEIR ELDEST BROTHER JOINING THEM? Yet we see from a verse in the following chapter, "When Reuben returned . . ." (Gen. 38:29) that he had *not* been with them. In saying, "They sat down to a meal," the Torah was recording an unusual fact, that they had eaten without their eldest brother. Why? THIS TEACHES YOU THAT HE FASTED ALL HIS DAYS. We also know that his fasting and repentance were effective since MOSES ACCEPTED HIM IN REPENTANCE recording it in the Torah AS IT SAYS, "REUBEN WILL LIVE AND NOT DIE" (Deut. 33:6).

Jacob, however, continued to worry, and spoke to each of his sons about his conduct. AND THUS IT IS THAT YOU ALSO FIND THAT WHEN OUR FATHER JACOB WAS ABOUT TO DEPART FROM THIS WORLD, HE CALLED HIS SONS AND REPROVED EACH ONE OF THEM INDIVIDUALLY, AS IT SAYS, "AND JACOB CALLED HIS SONS . . . REUBEN YOU ARE MY FIRST BORN . . . SIMEON AND LEVI ARE A PAIR . . . YOU, O JUDAH, YOUR BROTHERS SHALL PRAISE . . ." (Gen. 49:1-8). AFTER HE HAD REPROVED EACH ONE INDIVIDUALLY, HE CALLED THEM ALL TOGETHER AND SAID TO THEM, "DO YOU HAVE ANY DOUBTS CONCERNING HE-WHO-SPOKE-AND-THE-WORLD-CAME-INTO-BEING?" THEY SAID TO HIM, "HEAR, O ISRAEL OUR FATHER, JUST AS YOU HAVE NO DOUBTS ABOUT HE-WHO-SPOKE-AND-THE-WORLD-CAME-INTO-BEING, SO DO WE HAVE NO DOUBTS. THE LORD IS OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE." THUS IT SAYS, "AND ISRAEL BOWED AT THE HEAD OF THE BED" (Gen. 47:31). Again, the simple meaning of the verse is questioned and reinterpreted. He bowed, meaning that he bowed in thankfulness, concerning the issue of his bed. He rejoiced that whatever might have happened during the long years of his life, whatever his children might have done, at the moment before his death he could rest assured that his children were true to the God whom he worshipped and there would not be yet another family division such as had happened before. DID HE ACTUALLY BOW AT THE HEAD OF THE BED? RATHER HE GAVE THANKS AND PRAISE THAT THOSE UNWORTHY HAD NOT ISSUED FROM HIM. As a reward, THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED IS HE, SAID UNTO HIM, "JACOB, THIS IS WHAT YOU DESIRED ALL

YOUR DAYS — THAT YOUR CHILDREN SHOULD PROCLAIM THE *SHEMA* MORNING AND EVENING!" The request he had made when he awoke from his dream, that unworthy children should not issue from him, had been fulfilled, and the daily recitation of the *Shema*, the ultimate oath of allegiance to God, is the symbol of his success.

Afterword

This midrash has created a masterful portrait of the patriarch as a human father, worrying about his children, concerned to pass on his values but knowing from past family experience how difficult this is. Furthermore, he sees at least one of his children leave his ways and fall victim to human desires and temptations, but he is blessed in that he sees that child return and repent. The theme of repentance is thus raised and Judaism's concept of the sinner as capable of repentance is taught. In this way the Biblical portrait of Reuben is also modified and elevated. He may be a sinner, but he is also a penitent. Finally, the majestic act of the *Shema*, proclaiming God's kingship and one's allegiance to God, is seen now as an act of family loyalty as well. We address not only our fellow Jews but, also, our ancestors and proclaim to them our acceptance of our role as faithful children, as carriers of God's covenant. Our hearts are whole, not divided, toward that which the patriarchs taught.

The Light

ZVI YA'IR

In the beginning, way on high,
the light was One,
yet descending it parted
to become
the blessing in the corn
in the flower the lace,
a gleam in the eye
and a smile
on the face,
in the muscles strong
and in the soul — a song.

Yet when
the grain be thrashed
and the sapling crushed,
when
the eye shall dim
and the smile shall fade
and the vigor wilt
and the song be stilled,
and all the rivers
to their source
have run —
the light
on that day
shall again
be — One.

(Translated from the Hebrew by Bernhard Frank)

ZVI YA'IR, formerly an Israeli, now lives in the United States. This poem appeared in Hebrew in a collection called *From The Top of the Crag*s.

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*The Contribution of Abraham Joshua Heschel**

SAMUEL H. DRESNER

THE LOSS OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel in 1972 has been felt in subsequent years with increasing poignancy. Time has not served its customary conciliatory function. The passing years have only emphasized the immensity of the void and the unique stature of the man.

For the Christian world, what Reinhold Niebuhr once described as a “commanding and authoritative voice . . . in the religious life of America” has been silenced. Both Catholics and Protestants sought out Heschel’s opinions on theological and social issues because they believed that these opinions represented an authentic Jewish perception expressed by one whose wisdom, piety, and integrity they esteemed. This fraternity with the Christian community manifested itself, for example, in Heschel’s persuasive presence at the Second Vatican Council and in his close bonds with leading figures of the Protestant church. It had its basis in the prophetic call for a just society and in what Heschel described as “Depth Theology” — those underpinnings of religion such as humility, compassion, faith and awe, which characterize the community of all true men of spirit.

For the Jewish world, the death of Abraham Heschel has been, of course, an incomparably greater blow. Jewry has lost a scholar, a thinker, a poet, and a social reformer of the first rank. One of Heschel’s unusual qualities was the universality of his concern. His interests were not limited to any single epoch or subject but embraced the totality of Jewish experience. Vertically, there was hardly a major topic in the history of Jewish thought which he did not plumb. In a time of growing specialization, most scholars prefer to restrict themselves to a single aspect of Jewish literature or thought. Not so Heschel. He contributed major works in a number of fields — Bible (*The Prophets*), Rabbinics (*Torah min ha-Shamayim*), Hasidism (*Kotzk*), Theology (*Man Is Not Alone*, *God in Search of Man*, and *Who is Man?*), and Ethics (*The Insecurity of Freedom*), among others. It was this mastery of virtually the entire Jewish creative experience which contributed to the richness of his thinking. If his scholarship moved readily in the

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vertical dimension from the Bible to contemporary thought, his Jewish concern was just as remarkably horizontal. By this I mean his understanding of, sympathy for, and acceptance by, almost the entire spectrum of Jewish life — from the Zionists and Hebraists to the Yiddishists, and from the Reform and Conservative to the Orthodox and the Hasidim. Though himself eschewing labels, identifying wholly with none of these schools and all the while holding his own views, Heschel established good relations with each of the factions, since he believed that they represented, in greater or lesser measure, an affirmation of Jewish life. His breadth expressed the quality of his *ahavat Yisrael* (love of Israel).¹

Heschel was intimately familiar with the Jewries with whom he resided. The liquidation of East European Jewry had left him as one of the few authentic interpreters of that great well-spring of Jewish life and thought. He knew not only the Jews of Germany and America as well, but also was thoroughly conversant with the contemporary general culture of those countries. I recall the observation of Eugen Taeubler, Mommsen's successor as professor of classics at Heidelberg, that Heschel had a better grasp of German culture than the German-born faculty of the American academic institution in which Taeubler found himself in the 40s. The same thing could have been said for Heschel's understanding of the pragmatic, open, and socially oriented American society which he came to appreciate soon after his arrival here in 1939, and for which, in time, he served as a leading spokesman.

Gifted with a moving literary style in four languages (Yiddish, Hebrew, German and English), he has left us a precious written legacy. Much of his work was produced at a prodigious rate in the language he mastered last, English, and comprises one of the most impressive bodies of writings by a single modern Jewish thinker. No one has yet picked up the pen he has set down, nor plumbed the depths of the Jewish mind so tellingly, nor so moved the heart. If it is true that the Jewish community's recognition of Heschel was belated, following, rather than preceeding, that accorded to him by Christians, then there is all the more reason for pain that we can no longer expect from him yet another startling book,

1. "My father," he wrote, "used to tell me a story about our grandfather. (Avraham Yehoshua Heschel, rabbi in Apt and later Mezbizh, after whom Heschel was named, was popularly known as The Lover of Israel [*Ohev Yisrael*,]the inscription on his grave and the title of his book.) He was asked by many other rebbes, 'How come that your prayers are always accepted and our prayers are not?' He gave the following answer: 'You see, whenever some Jew comes to me and pours out his heart and tells me of his misery and suffering I have such compassion that a little hole is created in my heart. Since I have heard and listened to a great many Jews with their problems and anguish, there are a great many holes in my heart. I'm an old Jew and when I start to pray I take my heart and place it before God. He sees this broken heart, so many holes, so many splits, so He has compassion for my heart and that's why He listens to me. He listens to my prayers.' " ("Hasidism," *Jewish Heritage*, [Fall/Winter 1972]: 21).

another bold act of prophetic leadership or another moving reaction to a challenging issue.

In no other field is the loss felt more keenly than that of Hasidic scholarship, for only now have a growing number of students begun to take seriously Martin Buber's long-denied claim, that Hasidism was the most significant phenomenon in the history of religion during the past two centuries. The new academic and popular interest in Hasidism is apparent from the surprising quantity of original works and reprints on the subject being published in Hebrew (see any recent issue of *Kiryat Sefer*) and the growing number of English publications, as well as the spate of courses being introduced in colleges. While the "decline" of the Hasidic movement has received generous attention from scholars, the evidence of its communal and intellectual vitality is only now beginning to receive a hearing. If not on the same exalted level as in its first three generations, the movement has nevertheless continued with unabated vigor, regularly producing a formidable series of leaders and a constantly growing, if uneven, literature. Despite early separatist tendencies, Hasidism returned to (and was admitted by) the official Jewish community, while in the second half of this century — even after the Holocaust — it has shown itself capable of taking root in the democratic societies of the West. Consider, for example, the fact that a disproportionate number of Jews who have made signal contributions to contemporary culture — Agnon in literature, Chagall in art and Buber and Heschel in philosophy — emerged from a Hasidic milieu. All of this, if touched on by publicists, has by and large been ignored by scholars. Heschel, whose studies on Maimonides and Abrabanel demonstrated his understanding of the Spanish epoch, argued that the "golden period" of Jewish history was not in Spain but in Eastern Europe. For him, the acme of Eastern European Jewry had been Hasidism, the high point of Post-Talmudic Jewish history.

While Heschel's specifically Hasidic studies are confined to a series of essays on the circle of the Besht (*Baal Shem Tov* — The Master of the Good Name), the founder of Hasidism, and the monumental work on Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Kotzk, his other writings often reflect Hasidic sources and insights. Indeed, the more familiar one becomes with Hasidic literature, the more one understands how Heschel drew upon it. The influence of Hasidism is reflected in his contributions to the understanding of the phenomenology of prophecy and of *ruah ha-kodesh* (the holy spirit). There are, for example, clear echoes of Hasidic concepts and concerns in Heschel's excursions upon the Sabbath as a bride, upon "divine pathos," the "ineffable," "radical amazement," the illusion of God's absence, the "holy dimension" of all reality, the "primacy of inwardness," the criticism of "panhalachism," the centrality of prayer, the "dignity of words," and the "endless yearning." Some of the section headings in *Man Is Not Alone* might be transposed to a book on Hasidic philosophy. In the final chapter of his work on Maimonides, describing that philosopher's

last years when he abandoned his scholarship for a life of *imitatio Dei*, one catches a glimpse of the zaddik for whom “living” Torah is more important than “writing” it.

Heschel as Scholar of Hasidism

Perhaps the single most important project which Heschel left unfinished at his untimely death, a project to which he was uniquely suited and which students and scholars of Judaism had long awaited, was his work on the life and thought of the Baal Shem Tov.² We do not know when he first made plans to write this comprehensive work, but while he was in Cincinnati (1940-45) he was already methodically gathering material. Perhaps the destruction of Hasidic life in Eastern Europe made him turn from those areas of Jewish thought in which he had been engaged, primarily Bible and Medieval philosophy, to a study of the movement he considered to be, in some ways, the final flowering of post-Biblical Jewish history. His agony over the Holocaust during those years in Cincinnati, while failing to influence public policy directly, led to his memorable portrait of Ashkenazic Jewry, *The Earth Is The Lord's*, in which he sketched its lasting qualities.³

Whatever the reasons, Heschel's book on the Besht was never written. Other works and projects, coming in quick succession, always post-

2. Heschel's plan is indicated in the introductory note to his first published essay on the history of Hasidism, the Yiddish study, “Reb Pinkhes Koretzer” (*Yivo Bletter*, Vol. 33, [1949], p. 9), which he describes as “a chapter from the author's work on *the Besht and his circle*” (italics S.H.D.). By July, 1947, Heschel had completed his essays on R. Pinhas of Koretz and R. Gershon of Kutov (*Ibid.*, p. 48).

3. In an interview with Heschel in 1963, the Yiddish journalist, Gershon Jacobson, recorded Heschel's recollections as a newcomer to America.

“I was an immigrant, a refugee. No one listened to me. Let me mention three examples: In 1941 I met with a prominent Jewish communal leader, a devoted Zionist. I told him that the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto lived with the belief that American Jewry works ceaselessly on their behalf. Were they to know of our indifference, the Jews in Warsaw would perish from shock. My words fell on deaf ears. In 1942 or 1941, I was at a convention of Reform rabbis. A representative of the Quakers appeared, demanding that the rabbis adopt a resolution to have food parcels sent to the Jews in the ghettos and concentration camps. The appeal was turned down. The rabbis explained that they could not do it officially, because it might aid the Germans by sending food into their territory. In 1943 I attended the “American Jewish Conference” of all Jewish organizations, to appeal that they act to extinguish the flames which had engulfed Eastern European Jewry. The “Conference” had a long agenda — Eretz-Yisrael, Fascism, finances, etc. — the last item of which was Jews under the Germans. By the time they reached this issue, almost all the representatives had left. I went away broken hearted.”

“What then, in fact, did you do?”

“I went to Rabbi Rabbi Eliezer Silver's synagogue in Cincinnati [where Heschel resided. R. Silver was actively involved in saving Jews during the Holocaust.], recited Psalms, fasted and cried myself out. I was a stranger in this country. My word had no power. When I did speak, they shouted me down. They called me a mystic, unrealistic. I had no influence on leaders of American Jewry” (*Day-Morning Journal*, June 13, 1963).

poned the work that must have been dearest to his heart. The closest he came was his profound study, in Yiddish, on a later Master, R. Menahem Mendel of Kotzk,⁴ which was finished at the very end of his life, as if at least one major statement on Hasidism had to be made before death snatched him away. In that book, a part of which he adapted into English as *A Passion for Truth*,⁵ he dealt, as well, with the Besht. True, his purpose was to contrast the way of the Besht with that of Kotzk, the main subject of the work, but in his remarks on the Besht he condensed a number of valuable insights into the founder of Hasidism.

In the introduction to *Kotzk*, Heschel permitted himself a personal statement, including a description of the tension that he felt between the way of each of these great men.

I was born in Warsaw, Poland, but my cradle stood in Mezbizh (a small town in the province of Podolia, Ukraine), where the Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Hasidic movement, lived during the last twenty years of his life. That is where my father came from, and he continued to regard it as his home . . . The earliest fascination I can recall is associated with the Baal Shem, whose parables disclosed some of the first insights I gained as a child. He remained a model too sublime to follow yet too overwhelming to ignore

. . . Years later I realized that, in being guided by both the Baal Shem Tov and the Kotzker, I had allowed two forces to carry on a struggle within me . . . Both spoke convincingly, and each proved right on one level yet questionable on another.

In a very strange way, I found my soul at home with the Baal Shem Tov and the Kotzker. Was it good to live with one's heart torn between the joy of Mezbizh and the anxiety of Kotzk? . . . I had no choice; my heart was in Mezbizh, my mind in Kotzk.

I was taught about inexhaustible mines of meaning by the Baal Shem; from the Kotzker I learned to detect immense mountains of absurdity standing in the way. The one taught me song, the other — silence. The one reminded me that there could be a Heaven on earth, the other shocked me into discovering Hell in the alleged Heavenly places in our world . . . The Baal Shem dwelled in my life like a lamp, while the Kotzker struck lightning. To be sure, lightning is more authentic. Yet one can trust a lamp, put confidence in it; one can live in peace with a lamp . . . The Kotzker's presence recalls the nightmare of mendacity. The presence of the Baal Shem is an assurance that falsehood dissolves into compassion through the power of love. The Baal Shem suspends sadness, the Kotzker enhances it. The Baal Shem helped me to refine my sense of mystery; the Kotzker warned me of the constant peril of forfeiting authenticity.⁶

From Heschel's childhood on, there were Hasidic leaders who looked to him as one with unique promise for renewing Hasidic life. That was not to be, at least not in the way that they had hoped. Descended from Hasidic nobility on both his father's and his mother's side, young Heschel's talents

4. *Kotzk: In Gerangel far Emesdikeit* (Kotzk: The Struggle for Integrity) 2 volumes, (Tel Aviv: Hamenorah Publishing House, 1973).

5. *A Passion for Truth* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1973).

6. *Op. cit.*, pp. xiii-xv.

were early recognized and, though he was only a child of ten at the time of his father's death, the Hasidim began to bring him *k'vittakh* and wished him to become their rebbe. "We thought," said the Rebbe of Kopitchinitz, a cousin and brother-in-law, "that he would be the Levi Yitzhak of our generation."⁷ A byword after his departure was that "had Heschel become a Rebbe, all the other Rebbeim would have lost their Hasidim." While his education had always been directed with special care in the selection of his teachers, even more attention was now paid in view of his promise, and it was during this period of his life that the influence of the remarkable Reb Bezalel, his teacher from the age of nine to twelve and a half, was most keenly felt. But the awareness of the worlds "outside" was stirring and the young Heschel did not accede to the Hasidim's wishes. His interest in secular studies began at about the age of fifteen or sixteen. His decision to leave Warsaw for Vilna and, later, Berlin to gain a secular education was received with concern. His mother, an unusual woman, clever and strong, who maintained the *shtibl* after her husband's death and appreciated her son's gifts, noticed that she no longer heard him chanting the Talmud from his room, for he was now engaged in learning Polish, and she inquired why. He told her of his plan and she communicated her concerns to the family in Vienna and Warsaw. A meeting of the family in Vienna, which Heschel may have attended, was called by the Tchortkover Rebbe. His mother's brother, the Novominsker Rebbe of Warsaw, at whose table he grew up, and one of the most powerful influences upon Heschel's life, tried to dissuade him, and agreed only when he saw that it was to no avail. "You can go," he told Heschel, "but *only* you."⁸ It

7. Quotations for which no sources are given come from this writer's conversations with Heschel or from family members.

8. The Novominsker Rebbe is important for another reason. One of Heschel's major contributions as a religious thinker was his analysis of Jewish piety. He was a phenomenologist. He held that discursive reason, while essential, was, alone, inadequate in penetrating the inner recesses of religion. This could better be achieved through a description of the religious phenomena itself, which, much like the artist's canvas, would have the power to evoke another level of comprehension. In composing his now classic picture of Jewish piety, Heschel drew from the lives and writings of holy men of the past, as well as from his own personal experience, but equally important were the living models he had known in his youth. One whom he identified was the Rabbi of Novominsk.

Rabbi Alter (added for long life) Yisrael Shimon (after his grandfather) Perlow (1874-1933) was Heschel's mother's twin. He was an unusual zaddik. Famed for his Talmudic learning and as a Kabbalist, his piety, Torah and love of Israel were well-known. He presided at the third Sabbath meal, the *Shalosh Seudos*, in a mood of ecstasy: his songs and words of Torah were wonderful, while his gestures and his face were marvelous to behold. It was he who brought Heschel's father to Warsaw, found a suitable place for him and, after the latter's early death, acted as mentor to the family. The Novominsker liked to have the young Avraham sit at his right hand when he spoke before the Hasidim at the Sabbath table. "His life," Heschel observed, "was consistent with his thought . . . He was a complete person. Not one minute of the day was allowed to pass without attempting to serve God with all of his strength. He gave himself over to a tremendous task: the service of the Almighty at every moment with every act. An ordinary *Mincha* prayer was like Yom Kippur elsewhere, and on

was on a Saturday night, after the close of the Sabbath that Heschel left Warsaw, changing his Shabbos hat for an ordinary weekday cap, and accompanied by his cousin, a son of the Novominsker Rabbi.

Just before the young Heschel was to depart his ancestral home in Poland for the secular society of the West, an old Hasid came to bid him farewell. Following the admonition that one should take leave with a word of Torah, the Hasid quoted the Mishnah (*Avot* 5:8) which cites as "one of the ten miracles of the Temple in Jerusalem" that, no matter what the provocation, "the holy flesh [of the sacrifice] did not ever become polluted." Then he told how R. Barukh of Medzibosh explained the passage: "One of the most wondrous miracles was, indeed, '*lo hisriaḥ b'sar kodesh me-olam*', which is to say, 'the holy flesh' — that is, the people of Israel — 'did not become polluted, *me-olam*, from the world.'"

"Avraham," the old Hasid concluded, taking him by the shoulders, "remember the word of R. Barukh. *Lo hisriaḥ b'sar kodesh me-olam*. You, Avraham, you holy flesh, do not become polluted from the world!"

Heschel left Warsaw for Vilna to study and graduate from the gymnasium there, joining, during his stay, the newly formed group of Yiddish poets, *In Zikh* (which included such figures as Avrohom Sutzkever and Hayim Grade, who recall in what high regard the youthful Heschel had been held). He then moved west to the University of Berlin and the *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentum*, to the Frankfurt *Lehrhaus*, to England and, finally, to America. He claimed that he was no longer a Hasid. He had, indeed, abandoned their style of dress and of restricted social contacts for the larger world, both Jewish and German.

In my childhood and in my youth (Heschel wrote), I was the recipient of many blessings. I lived in the presence of quite a number of extraordinary persons I could revere. And just as I lived as a child in their presence, their presence continues to live in me as an adult. And yet I am not just a dwelling

the Sabbath, as he put each morsel of food into his mouth, he would say, *L'hoved Shabbos Kodesh*, 'for the honor of the holy Sabbath.' This latter custom was not practiced even by my father, while the Gerer Hasidim who were the majority in Poland and followed the austere teachings of Kotzk, opposed it as excessive expression of one's feelings."

Heschel's appreciation of his uncle is confirmed by other sources. The Gerer Rebbe, the ranking Hasidic leader in Poland, so admired him that he used to send him his Hasidim, and would visit him whenever he was in Warsaw. This writer has seen a *k'vutl* from the Gerer Rebbe to the Novominsker. When the Gerer Rebbe sought someone to head the powerful Agudat Yisroel organization, he remarked that there was only one person in all of Poland whom he could recommend without qualification: the Novominsker Rebbe; and when his followers asked whom they should consult upon his departure for a visit to the Holy Land, the Gerer again responded: the Novominsker. Hillel Zeitlin, the noted writer, observed: "Whenever I felt depressed and needed to repent, I visited the Rabbi of Novominsk." The chief rabbi of Tel Aviv, Rabbi Yedidia Frankel, said, "The picture I have in my mind of a perfect zaddik is the Rabbi of Novominsk. His profound wisdom, his *hatmadah*, the depth of his Kabbalistic learning, his *hadrat panim*, the smile which never left his face, his *ahavat Yisroel*, his refusal to utter a critical word about another, were unforgettable." (Cf. H. Rabinowicz, *The World of Hasidism* [London: Valentine, 1970], pp. 164-166; Bromberg, A., *Hasidic Leaders*).

place for other people, an echo of the past . . . I disagree with those who think of the present in the past tense . . . [T]he greatest danger is to become obsolete. I try not to be stale. I try to remain young. I have one talent and that is the capacity to be tremendously surprised, surprised at life, at ideas. This is to me the supreme Hasidic imperative.⁹

To the end, Heschel remained an anomaly. Most of those who had left the narrow Hasidic milieu of Eastern Europe for the modern, open society of the West — especially if they pursued studies in the humanities — exchanged the one world for the other, often repudiating their Hasidic origins. This was true even of those engaged in Jewish research. The art, philosophy and literature of the West, as well as its power and apparent freedom, were more than attractive; they were overwhelming. The enthusiastic reviews of Heschel's early works, *Die Prophetie* and *Maimonides*, confirmed how highly he was considered according to the West's own scientific and literary standards. Nonetheless, while mastering European *Kultur* and *Wissenschaft* and recognizing their values, Heschel retained his own religious position and even his Hasidic bias.

In an address before the annual convention of American Reform Rabbis in 1952, he gave a memorable description of the conflict that he experienced between Berlin and Warsaw, between the intellectual claim of the university and the way of Torah:

I came with great hunger to the University of Berlin to study philosophy. I looked for a system of thought, for the depth of the spirit, for the meaning of existence. Erudite and profound scholars gave courses in logic, epistemology, esthetics, ethics and metaphysics. They opened the gates of the history of philosophy. I was exposed to the austere discipline of unremitting inquiry and self criticism . . .

Yet, in spite of the intellectual power and honesty which I was privileged to witness, I became increasingly aware of the gulf that separated my views from those held at the university. I had come with a sense of anxiety: how can I rationally find a way where ultimate meaning lies, a way of living where one would never miss a reference to supreme significance? Why am I here at all, and what is my purpose? . . . But to my teachers that was a question unworthy of philosophical analysis.

I realized my teachers were prisoners of a Greek-German way of thinking. They were fettered in categories which presupposed certain metaphysical assumptions which could never be proved. The questions I was moved by could not even be adequately phrased in categories of their thinking.

My assumption was: man's dignity consists in his having been created in the likeness of God. My question was: how must man, a being who is in essence the image of God, think, feel and act? To them, religion was a feeling. To me, religion included the insights of the Torah which is a vision of man from the point of view of God. They spoke of God from the point of view of man. To them God was an idea, a postulate of reason. They granted Him the status of being a logical possibility. But to assume that He had existence would have been a crime against epistemology.

The problem to my professors was how to be good. In my ears the question rang: how to be holy. At the time I realized: There is much that philoso-

9. "In Search of Exaltation," *Jewish Heritage* (Fall, 1971): 29.

phy could learn from Jewish life. To the philosophers the idea of the good was the most exalted idea, the ultimate idea. To Judaism the idea of good is pen-ultimate . . . The good is the base, the holy is the summit. Man cannot be good unless he strives to be holy . . .

I did not come to the university because I did not know the idea of the good, but to learn why the idea of good is valid, why and whether values had meaning. Yet I discovered that values sweet to taste proved sour in analysis; the prototypes were firm, the models flabby . . .

In those months I went through moments of profound bitterness . . . I walked alone in the evenings through the magnificent streets . . ., and I was pondering whether to go to the new Max Reinhardt play or to a lecture about the theory of relativity.

Suddenly I noticed the sun had gone down, evening had arrived.

*From what time may one recite the Shema in the evening?*¹⁰ I had forgotten God — I had forgotten Sinai — I had forgotten that sunset is my business — that my task is “to restore the world to the kingship of the Lord.”

So I began to utter the words of the evening prayer.

*Blessed art thou, Lord our God,
King of the universe,
who by His word brings on the evening twilight . . .*

On that evening in the streets of Berlin, I was not in a mood to pray. My heart was heavy, my soul was sad. It was difficult for the lofty words of prayer to break through the dark clouds of my inner life.

But how would I dare not to *davn*? How would I dare to miss evening prayer? “Out of *emah*, out of fear of God do we read the *Shema*.”¹¹

Contact with Western culture, particularly with German Jewry, its synagogues and academies of higher Jewish learning, made Heschel all the more certain that Hasidic thinking and living contained a treasure which should be made available to the emancipated Jew. His early studies on prophecy and on Maimonides had stressed themes such as the divine pathos, the striving for prophecy and *imitatio Dei* — concepts to which he had been sensitized by Hasidism. But what of Hasidism itself? What of that immense repository of surprising beauty and startling wisdom of which the West was not only ignorant but contemptuously ignorant? Where should one begin? Hasidism constituted a panorama of hundreds of remarkable spiritual figures, each with his own special way, and a literature whose books were precious, because, according to R. Pinhas of Koretz, unlike other works, one did not have to turn countless pages in them to find God. Before understanding the contributions of its notable leaders and the meaning of its most important books, one had to address the phenomenon of the Hasidic movement's creator, the Baal Shem Tov. This was the task to which Heschel began to direct himself.

Besieged by controversy, Hasidism had emerged, in the eighteenth

10. The first words of the *Mishnah* dealing with the evening prayer.

11. A play on *me-emah-tai*, (“From what time”), the first word of the *Mishnah* dealing with evening prayer, which is taken to mean, “out of *emah*,” i.e., “out of fear of God.” This interpretation comes from the Hasidic master, Rabbi Levi Yitzhak Berditchev. See *Man's Quest for God* (Scribners: New York, 1954), pp. 94-98; “Toward an Understanding of Halakha,” *Year-book of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*, vol. 63, 1953, pp. 386-391.

century, as a reform movement which engendered bitter opposition. Its early writings, such as the *Toldot Yaakov Yosef* (1780), were largely polemical, attacking not only the decline of Judaism into legalism and asceticism, but also the corruption of Jewish life itself. To correct the malaise, Hasidism boldly proposed a new type of leader, the *zaddik*, a new kind of service to God which was not limited to Torah-study and worship but embraced "all one's ways," and a new mood of joy and exaltation. Along with this program came the advocacy for the establishment of separate synagogues. A furious clash of forces followed, producing a polemical literature from the Mitnagdim, as the opponents of the Hasidim were called.

Though the Hasidim, at first separatists themselves and later excluded by the ruling group, finally rejoined the general community, the remnants of the early opposition never disappeared. The bitterness which provoked the excommunications of the first generations was still felt in the twentieth century. Its tone could be heard in the anti-Hasidic satire in the East and the highly critical reports by historians in the West. If Hasidim were drunkards, and *zaddikim* little deities dabbling in witchcraft,¹² then it should come as no surprise that the Besht himself was the object of stinging jibes. "Ignoramus" and "sorcerer" were the two terms most commonly applied to him. In an atmosphere where Western scholars, such as Graetz, were so critical of Hasidism, it was natural that disturbing questions would continue to be raised: Did the Baal Shem, in fact, ever live? Do we possess any evidence about him from contemporary sources, apart from the hagiography which accumulated after his death? What do we know of his early followers? What was their relationship to the Frankists and the Sabbatean heresy?

Adored by some and reviled by others, the subject of miracle legends and scurrilous gossip, the inspiration for subsequent communities of the faithful as well as decrees of excommunication, the Baal Shem himself seemed shrouded in mystery. How to get behind the legend to the man? If an historian of Polish Jewry of the distinction of Meir Balaban despaired, in the 1920s and 30s, of finding any verifiable historical evidence about the founder of Hasidism,¹³ imagine the difficulties that confronted scholars after the Holocaust had destroyed most of the primary sources, as well as the movement's living tradition.

Heschel felt it vital that the historical basis for the rise of Hasidism be established to whatever extent it was still possible. To do so meant examining the entire eighteenth century rabbinic literature for occasional hints and references to the early Hasidic figures. The libraries of Hebrew Union College and, especially, The Jewish Theological Seminary, provided him with the opportunity for an unprecedentedly careful and thor-

12. Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1898), Vol. V, pp. 375-381.

13. M. Balaban, "*Hasidut*," *Hatekufah*, (1923): 487-495. Cf. I. Biderman, *Mayer Balaban* (New York, 1976), p. 205.

ough review. His work was severely hampered by the disastrous fire at the latter institution in 1966 which destroyed or made unavailable many of the rare volumes that he needed. With the help of the book-dealer, Jaker Biegeleisen, Heschel also began to rebuild his own Hasidic library, though he could not replace the valuable material, including rare manuscripts, which he had lost in Europe. In 1949, aware of the presence in America of some of the central figures of the Hasidic remnant who had survived, he founded the YIVO Hasidic Archives, which functioned under his guidance and was directed by Moses Shulvass, to search out what could still be salvaged. Heschel believed that there was a reliable oral tradition going back to the early Hasidic period, if only one knew where to look and how to listen. The YIVO Archives were, therefore, used as well for field work and oral histories.

In his relentless search, no document which might illuminate the origins of Hasidism was overlooked. Even rare and early Polish periodicals were scrutinized. Scholars who brought him their discoveries in this field almost always found that Heschel had been there before them. By exhaustively exploring the literature of the early eighteenth century for new information regarding the Besht and by reexamining known material and allusive oral traditions, Heschel sought to move toward an historical understanding of the founder of Hasidism. The major results of his early work were a series of essays, published in Hebrew and Yiddish, in which he attempted, for the first time, to chart the lives and describe the teachings of the intimate circle whom the Besht had gathered about him as disciples, colleagues, or both. These monographs constitute a significant corpus of research preliminary to a proper appreciation of the Besht. If this comprehensive work was planned in two volumes — the first treating the history and the second the doctrines of the Besht — these five essays would have supplied much of the material for the first volume.

As we have noted, Heschel did not complete the work on the Besht. One would have wished to possess a comprehensive statement from him, even a single essay, on the meaning of Hasidism, but, unfortunately, almost all of his published Hasidic research is of a technical nature. He rarely even lectured on the subject, nor, I believe, did he ever offer a formal course on Hasidism either at The Jewish Theological Seminary, where he taught for over twenty years, or elsewhere. His scanty lecture notes do, however, provide brilliant, if all too brief, insights. At one point he even hints at the reasons for his reticence. "Young boys are shy," his notes read. "Too shy to lecture on Hasidim. It is too personal. Too intimate. I remained a boy even after becoming a man!"

While it is to be regretted that the detailed monographs dealing with the circle of the Baal Shem failed to lead to a full-length evaluation of the doctrine of Hasidism and its significance — especially since Heschel's textual and historical studies were generally done not for their own sake but in order to distill the meaning of the material that he researched — there

are a number of scattered remarks in his notes, in his more popular writings, and in *A Passion for Truth*, which point to what he wished eventually to say. Obviously, they must not be taken as his measured and scholarly view either of the movement or of the man who was its founder:

Hasidism [he writes] was neither a sect nor a doctrine. It was a dynamic approach to reality. That was its essence. It succeeded in liquifying a frozen system of values and ideas. Everything was neatly labelled — good and evil, clean and unclean, safe and dangerous, rich and poor, *rasha* and *zaddik*, *mizvah* and *averah*, beautiful and ugly, truth and falsehood. But, such a division is artificial. Life cannot be enclosed in boxes. Values are often ambiguous. What, for example, is beauty? Something in itself, or an experience born when a person who loves the beautiful discovers it? In attaching oneself to the source of all unity, the Hasid learned to bend every action to the ultimate goal. Hasidism opposed the externalization of the maggid's preaching and the idolatry of the talmudist's learning. It attacked the inclemency of intellectualism, the rigidity of legalism, a system of life which had become chilly. The Hasid studied the Talmud also to experience its soul, to envision worlds. Hasidism brought warmth, light, enthusiasm; it set life aflame. It was one of the great conquests of Jewish history. The admonition not to fool others was given a new turn: don't fool yourself. Truthfulness, wholeheartedness was central. The aphorism became a mode for hasidic thinking. The parable took on new power. Doctrines affected life and were transformed into attitudes and facts. Hasidism learned how to fight with the enemies' weapons — the evil urge (*yezer ha-ra*) and joy (*simha*). It taught that holiness was something concrete and positive. There are two ways of instilling discipline: knowledge of the law and understanding its meaning: Halakhah and Kabbalah. At a time when the spectacular phenomenon of *lamdanut* (talmudic learning) was praised, Hasidism stressed *anavah*, (humility), the imponderable, the inaudible. It taught reverence, enthusiasm. It taught that scholarship for its own sake could be an idol, that God is greater than sin.¹⁴

It was a time when the Jewish imagination was nearly exhausted. The mind had reached an impasse, thinking about impossible possibilities in Talmudic law. The heart was troubled by oppressive social and economic conditions, as well as the teachings of ascetic preachers. Then a miracle occurred. It was as if Providence had proclaimed, "Let there be light!" And there was light — in the form of an individual: Reb Israel, son of Eliezer, Baal Shem Tov, "master of the Good Name" (ca. 1690-1760) . . .

The Baal Shem was the founder of the Hasidic movement, and Mezbizh was the cradle in which a new understanding of Judaism was nurtured. When millions of our people were still alive in Eastern Europe and their memory and faith vibrated with thought, image, and emotion, the mere mention of Reb Israel Baal Shem Tov cast a spell upon them . . . During his lifetime, Reb Israel inspired a large number of disciples to follow him. After his death his influence became even more widespread. Within a generation, the insights he had formulated at Mezbizh had captivated the Jewish masses with new spiritual ideas and values. And Mezbizh became the symbol of Hasidism. Rarely in Jewish history has one man succeeded in uplifting so many individuals to a level of greatness . . . No one in the long chain of charismatic figures that followed him was equal to the Baal Shem.

Hasidism represents an enigma. It is the enigma of the impact of one

14. This paragraph is drawn from Heschel's lecture notes.

great man, the Besht . . . who in a very short time was able to capture the majority of the Jewish people and to keep them under his spell for generations. What was there about him that was not to be found in other great Jewish personalities like Maimonides or even Isaac Luria or Akiba? . . . The answers given are partly sociological, partly historical; I believe there is also a Hasidic answer to this Hasidic riddle . . . [in] the following story:

In Poland in the eighteenth century, a king was nominated, not as a matter of heritage but of election. Noblemen would get together from all over the country and . . . elect a king. The king could also be a citizen of a foreign country, so whenever a king died and there was a possibility of election, many princes and aristocrats from all over Europe would vie for that honor. And this is what happened. The king passed away and immediately various princes, eager to become king of Poland, sent their representatives to Poland . . . each . . . sing[ing] the praises of his candidate. "He is the wisest of all men," one . . . said. "He is the wealthiest," said another. "The kindest," said a third. This went on for days, and no decision was reached. Finally one representative decided he would take his candidate, the prince himself, bring him to the people and say: "Here he is, look at him, see how grand he is!"

And that man was elected.

Many Jews talked about God, but it was the Besht who brought God to the people. Reb Israel Baal Shem Tov revealed the Divine as present even in our shabby world, in every little thing, and especially in man. He taught that the zaddikim who grasped the bond between Creator and creature were blessed with so great a power that they were able to perform marvelous acts of mystical unification in the sphere of the Divine. Furthermore, every man in this world could work deeds that might affect the worlds above. Most important, attachment to God was possible, even while carrying out mundane tasks or making small talk.

. . . The Baal Shem brought about a radical shift in the religious outlook of Jewry. In ancient times the sanctuary in Jerusalem had been the holy center from which expiation and blessing radiated out to the world. But the sanctuary was in ruins, the soul of Israel in mourning. Then the Baal Shem established a new center: the zaddik, the rebbe — he was to be the sanctuary. For the Baal Shem believed that a man could be the true dwelling place of the Divine. The Jewish people is not the same since the days of the Besht . . . Other personalities contributed great works; they left behind impressive achievements; the Besht left behind a new people. To many Jews the mere fulfillment of regulations was the essence of Jewish living . . . The Besht taught that Jewish life is an occasion for exaltation. Observance of the Law is the basis, but exaltation through observance is the goal . . . His contribution, therefore, consisted of more than illumination, insights, and ideas; he helped mold into being new types of personality: the Hasid and the Zaddik . . . [T]he greatness of the Besht was that he was the beginning of a long series of . . . moments of inspiration. And he holds us in his spell to this very day. There has been no one like him during the last thousand years.¹⁵

Descendant of a Hasidic dynasty and heir of the living tradition at its most vital source, master of the philosophical and historical-critical method of the West as well as possessing unusual creative gifts, Heschel was perhaps the one scholar who might have given us the definitive work on Hasidism.

15. A composite from "Hasidism," *Jewish Heritage* (Fall/Winter, 1972): 14-16, and *A Passion for Truth*, pp. 3-7.

Gershom Scholem and Anarchism as a Jewish Philosophy

DAVID BIALE

AS THE VIRTUAL CREATOR OF THE STUDY OF Jewish mysticism as an academic discipline, Gershom Scholem enlarged the definition of Jewish history to include irrational elements along with rational and legal ones. Yet, Scholem's importance extends well beyond the walls of the academy, for the results of his historiography suggest a new philosophy of Judaism and, as such, his work constitutes a significant contribution to modern Jewish thought. It is only fitting, in the wake of his death in February 1982, that we reflect on the larger meaning of his legacy and what message it may convey for the urgent issues of Jewish life today.

The fundamental argument of Scholem's historiography is that Judaism has never been a monolithic tradition, but, rather, pluralistic. This pluralism consists in a range of frequently contradictory opinions — rational and irrational, philosophical and mythical, legal and antinomian — which are all equally legitimate. Only by understanding this tradition in its anarchistic entirety can one grasp the “essence” of Judaism, an essence which is distinguished by its lack of one definition.

Yet Scholem went beyond pluralism to suggest that it was precisely the mystical and even potentially heretical forces which were the sources of vitality in Jewish history. His studies of Jewish mysticism were not designed only to rectify a gap in our historical knowledge, but to point to the key to Jewish survival. I have elsewhere called his philosophy an anarchistic “counter-history” in which neglected underground ideas — Jewish mysticism and messianism — are revealed as the vital forces.¹

Scholem called himself a religious anarchist.² By anarchism, he seems to have meant that there is no single voice of authority in the Jewish tradition. Where others saw a monolithic Judaism, Scholem found an anarchistic struggle between competing traditions. He believed that the Kabbalah already anticipated this antidogmatic theory of Judaism in its insistence on the infinite interpretability of revelation. For the Kabbalists, Scholem argued, revelation

1. David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1979; revised paperback edition, 1982).

2. “Reflections on the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time,” (Hebrew) *Amot* 2 (1964): 11-19; *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, ed. Werner Dannhauser (New York, 1976), pp. 32-33. Scholem shares this self-definition with other important twentieth-century Jewish thinkers such as Martin Buber.

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is no longer the weight of the statements that attain communication in it, but the infinite number of interpretations to which it is open. The character of the absolute is recognizable by its infinite number of possible interpretations Infinitely many lights burn in each word Each word of the Torah has seventy — according to some, 600,000 — faces or facets. Without giving up the fundamentalist thesis of the divine character of the scriptures, such mystical theses nevertheless achieve an astounding loosening of the concept of Revelation. Here the authority of Revelation also constitutes the basis of the freedom in its application and interpretation Legitimacy was also accorded to progressive insight and speculation, which could combine a subjective element with what was objectively given In principle, then, every one of the community of Israel has his own access to Revelation, which is open only to him and which he himself must discover.³

This anarchistic concept of revelation and tradition is the precursor to modern secularism. But instead of secularism constituting a break from Jewish history, it became for Scholem a modern version of the Kabbalah, although a version far more radically hostile toward the authority of the law.

This connection between the Kabbalah and secularism found a most striking expression in his Hebrew essay on Franz Rosenzweig where he wrote:

The God who has been banished from man by psychology and from the world by sociology, no longer desired to sit in the heavens and he therefore gave up the seat of the quality of justice to dialectical materialism and the seat of the quality of mercy to psychoanalysis. He contracted himself until nothing of him remained revealed But perhaps his last contraction is really revelation? Perhaps the disappearance of God into a point of nothingness has a higher purpose and only in a world which has been totally emptied of him will be where his kingdom is revealed?⁴

Scholem's use of Kabbalistic terms such as *middat ha-din* and *middat ha-rahamim* and the Lurianic "contraction" is quite deliberate. Although the Kabbalists were not themselves either secularists or anarchists, Scholem uses their theology as the source for his secularism. Seen Kabbalistically, the disappearance of God in modern secularism may be a paradoxical form of revelation. Secularism thus becomes a legitimate — and perhaps, for Scholem, the *most* legitimate — form of Judaism in modern times.

In rejecting a dogmatic view of Jewish history, Scholem equally rejected the dogmatists of the modern period. Thus, in his 1945 essay, "Reflections on the Science of Judaism," he attacked those rationalists who purged Jewish history of its demonic elements in order to present a

3. "Reflections on Jewish Theology," *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, pp. 268-270. See also "The Meaning of the Torah in Jewish Mysticism" in *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Mannheim (New York, 1969), pp. 32-87.

4. "Franz Rosenzweig and his Book, 'The Star of Redemption'" (Hebrew) in *Devarim be-Go*, (Tel Aviv, 1975), p. 414.

form of Judaism compatible with bourgeois culture. Such nineteenth-century thinkers wanted

to remove the irrational stinger and banish the demonic enthusiasm from Jewish history through exaggerated theologizing and spiritualizing. This was actually the decisive original sin. This terrifying giant, our history, is called to task . . . and this enormous creature, full of destructive power, made up of vitality, evil and perfection, must contract itself, stunt its growth and declare that it has no substance. The demonic giant is nothing but a simple fool who fulfills the duties of a solid citizen and every decent Jewish bourgeois could unashamedly bid him good-day in the streets of the city, the immaculate city of the 19th century.⁵

In both his academic work and his political choices, Scholem was profoundly motivated by a sense of *épater les bourgeois*. The study of mysticism as a legitimate part of Jewish history and emigration to Palestine as a Zionist were both rejections of what he perceived as the dogmatic rationalism of the bourgeois German Jews.

Scholem seems to have held that an anarchistic or antidogmatic Jewish life could flourish only in a Jewish society in Israel. Zionism erased the need for apologetic rationalism or dogmatic orthodoxy and provided the necessary prerequisite for the constructive conflict between all interpretations of Judaism. For him, Zionism was an anarchist's answer to the deleterious effects of exile on the Jewish mentality.

Yet, Scholem was just as hostile to new forms of nationalist dogmatism. Against his colleagues at the Hebrew University, he wrote in the same essay:

We came to rebel but we ended up continuing (in the same path) . . . All these plagues have now disguised themselves in nationalism. From the frying pan into the fire: after the emptiness of assimilation comes another, that of nationalist excess. We have cultivated nationalist "sermons" and "rhetoric" (*melitza*) in science to take the place of religious sermons and rhetoric. In both cases, the real forces operating in our world, the genuine demonic remains outside the picture we have created.⁶

This rejection of a new nationalist dogma in historiography can be detected equally in his politics. In the late 1920s, he was active in the Brit Shalom group and polemicized vigorously against what he called the "apocalyptic messianism" of the Revisionists.⁷ In the years following the 1967 war, he several times denounced the growing chauvinism and messianism of the religious right.⁸

5. "Reflections on the Science of Judaism," *Luah ha-Arez* (1944-45), reprinted in *Devarim be-Go*, p. 396.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 402.

7. See, for example, "Three Sins of Brit Shalom" (Hebrew), *Davar*, (12 December, 1929): 2. For Scholem's own account of his role in Brit Shalom, see "With Gershom Scholem" in *On Jews and Judaism*, pp. 43-45.

8. See, in particular, "The Threat of Messianism: An Interview with Gershom Scholem," *New York Review of Books*, (14 August 1980) :22.

Thus, in his politics as in his historiography, Scholem represented an anarchistic and secular approach to Jewish life. He opposed any attempt to impose a dogmatic and monolithic definition on either Jewish history or Jewish politics, whether by the orthodox, the modern rationalists or the nationalists. He once described the Judaism of the Halakhah as a "well-ordered house" and commented that "a well-ordered house is a dangerous thing. Something of Messianic apocalypticism penetrates into this house, perhaps I can best describe it as a kind of anarchic breeze."⁹ If Messianism served this function for the world of the Halakhah, Scholem's own historiography and philosophy of Judaism surely represent the "anarchic breeze" in modern Jewish thought.

If this anarchistic philosophy is as important in modern Jewish thought as I have argued, then it is entirely appropriate to subject it to criticism and to ask to what extent it remains relevant today. There can be no doubt that anarchism as a philosophy is difficult to sustain. How, for example, is it possible to reconcile anarchism, which renounces any single voice of authority, with a normative tradition like Judaism? Scholem is careful to assert that, for the most part, the Kabbalists submitted to the authority of the legal tradition; in this sense, they were not anarchists. Their anarchism was theological at best, but lacked any practical dimension until the antinomianism of the radical Sabbatians. Even if a secular or anarchistic potential can be found in this tradition, there remains a large gap between such potential and its modern realization. Scholem saw the historian as the modern incarnation of the traditional exegete in secular garb: history is the modern form of commentary. Thus, the secular Jew becomes a part of his tradition by studying the sources of that tradition. Yet, the historian must stand at a distance from his sources and, indeed, Scholem repeatedly insisted that he was no mystic. We might therefore ask whether it is possible to sustain a religious tradition by historical study of its sources when the historian deliberately avoids adopting the norms of the tradition. How can a tradition continue if we perceive its normative prescriptions as fundamentally alien?

Scholem himself displayed persistent ambivalence towards the contemporary consequences of his work. Unlike Martin Buber, he did not wrench Jewish mysticism out of its historical context to support his own theological position. But, at the same time, he saw an affinity between his own secularism and the theology of the Kabbalah and he borrowed Kabbalistic terminology when he spoke in his own voice. By hiding behind the Kabbalah in places where he seemed to be expressing his own views, he created an almost deliberate confusion: was he "merely" an historian or also an original thinker who wished to use his historiography for contemporary purposes?

A similar tension can be found in his work on apocalyptic Messia-

9. *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York, 1971), p. 21.

nism. Baruch Kurzweil accused him of identifying with the extreme anti-nomianism of the Sabbatians.¹⁰ There can be no doubt from his polemical writings against the Revisionists Zionists that these charges were unfounded: Scholem was no latter-day Sabbatian. Yet, one has an uneasy feeling that he never quite resolved his fascination with the demonic and anarchistic forces he discovered. Deeply influenced by the German Romantics, he saw the constructive possibilities in destructive forces. Even in his evaluation of the most radical Sabbatians, like Jacob Frank, he was seemingly torn between admiration for their messianic energy and hostility toward their betrayal of Judaism. On the one hand, as an anarchist, he wanted to admit all historical phenomena as legitimately Jewish. But, at the same time, he recoiled from the contemporary consequences of his historiography. Thus, he sided with the radicals in Jewish history, but with moderates in Zionists politics. He wanted to banish the “demonic” from contemporary affairs.

We come here to another fundamental difficulty in Scholem's work. At the beginning of his magisterial biography of Sabbatai Sevi, he wrote: “I have written this book on the basis of a particular dialectical view of Jewish history and the forces acting within it.”¹¹ This view, as we have seen, was that Judaism consists of a dynamic struggle between contradictory principles in which the source of vitality lies in the mystical and the messianic. While Scholem admitted, on one level, that all other phenomena in Jewish history such as philosophy and law are equally legitimate, there is an implication in statements such as those that the truly significant forces are the irrational ones. Moreover, just as he took the inspiration for his anarchistic philosophy from the Kabbalah, so he implied that Jewish philosophy and law were the precursors of the bourgeois dogmatism that he rejected in his youth. Thus, one senses that Scholem considered the mystical traditions to be the “true” Judaism. Would it be legitimate to argue that he substituted a new “dogma” for those that he rejected? Isn't the claim that “the vital force in Judaism is mysticism” as dogmatic as the claim that “Judaism is rational”?

It would be an unfair exaggeration to suggest that Scholem's position was so extreme. He was always careful to qualify his view of mysticism and not to identify too closely with his sources. At the most, we may speak to a tension in his thought between genuine pluralism and an exclusive claim for the mystics. That this tension is never adequately resolved in his work seems to me deliberate; he wished to preserve a certain ambiguity that would leave his readers guessing. Above all, Scholem was a great *poseur*; yet the obfuscating pose certainly points to a very real conflict in him between the historian and the *homo religiosus*.

Even if it were extreme to say that the centrality of the Kabbalah in

10. Baruch Kurzweil, *Ba-ma'avak al Arkhei ha-Yahadut* (Tel Aviv, 1969), pp. 99-150.

11. *Sabbatai Sevi. The Mystical Messiah, 1626-1676.*, trans. R.J.Z. Werblowsky (Princeton, 1973), x.

Jewish history is a new dogma, it is true that Scholem's success has created a conservative academic establishment. To study mysticism in his time was an act of rebellion against a whole world-view. He brought metaphysical passion to his historical studies and was, therefore, able to infuse the most painstaking philology with intellectual urgency. Today, the study of Jewish mysticism has become part of the academic mainstream, a legitimate branch of Jewish studies at the Israeli universities. It is a discrete speciality with its own required courses, examinations and all the other rituals and paraphernalia of academic respectability. In departments of Jewish thought, all students, even if they are interested in philosophy, are required to read some Kabbalistic texts. Within a period of a generation, Jewish mysticism has come out of the closet and taken an honored seat in the salon. It is perhaps a symptom of Scholem's achievement that practically none of the work of his disciples breathes with the anarchistic spirit and metaphysical concerns of his writings. Too often, the study of the Kabbalah today has become technical philology devoid of passion and breadth. Like all revolutions that succeed, the acceptance of the Kabbalah has brought about the loss of the polemical edge and the theological urgency that emanates from Scholem's work..

Anarchism can never be normative; it must always stand outside of institutions as their critic. For Scholem, historiography should serve the same function in the modern period that the Kabbalah and Messianism served in an earlier one: to rejuvenate fossilized traditions by questioning conventions and offering new self-definitions. Jewish historians today should consider the notion of the historian as critic by rereading the essay on the "Science of Judaism." Writing in 1945, he warned against the twin dangers of antiquarianism and nationalist self-glorification. One wonders if these problems are not even more prevalent today than they were then. Scholem believed that, in the wake of Zionism, historiography would no longer have need of apologetics. And, yet, the lachrymose theory of Jewish history, with all of its apologetic overtones, remains as powerful today as in the nineteenth century, especially in the historiography of the Holocaust. The theme of Jewish powerlessness has been exaggerated out of all proportion in the service of political polemic. Instead, historians might better turn their attention to those neglected aspects of Jewish history that reveal the Jews as human beings and not as either heroes or victims. Scholem himself suggested to me, once, that now that the study of Jewish mysticism has been universally accepted, historians should undertake an investigation of the Jewish underworld. In fact, I regard it as a sign of health that historians are now beginning to examine the private lives of Jews in history: how they grew up, married, worked and educated their children.

As Scholem's own career attests, the study of history cannot be divorced from the politics and culture of the historian's world. If historiography has fallen prey to new forms of dogmatism, this can only be a

result of some disturbing trends in Jewish life, trends of which Scholem himself was acutely aware. For his generation, Zionism was a form of rebellion, just as his decision to study Kabbalah was a revolutionary act. As an anarchist in his youth, he opposed World War I and turned to Zionism as an answer to the corruption of European politics. Disillusioned with both religious orthodoxy and bourgeois rationalism, he saw in Zionism the only possibility for a secular Jewish renewal. Today, Zionism is no longer a mode of rebellion; its very success has bred a crisis which has necessarily become a crisis for Jews everywhere. Where it earlier attracted a romantic anarchist like Scholem, Zionism today has become the new orthodoxy. Small wonder that it has increasingly become allied with religious orthodoxy as well. Just as study of the Kabbalah started as an act of rebellion, only to become a part of an establishment, so the revolutionary passions of early Zionism have now been transformed into defensiveness and chauvinism. Scholem himself, shortly before his death, warned that the current Messianic Zionism could have even more disastrous consequences than the failure of Sabbatianism: Sabbatianism led only to a spiritual breakdown while, today, Messianism could have profound political ramifications. If Zionism taught us that powerlessness is suicidal, today we are coming to learn the dangers inherent in power itself.

Jewish life stands, therefore, at a crossroads similar to that of the turn of the century when Zionism shattered the dangerous complacency of the European Jews. Where Scholem's revolt against dogmatic truths led quite rightly to Zionism, a genuine Jewish anarchism today remains in search of a home. In both the study of history and in Jewish political and cultural life, there is an urgent need for a renewal of the "anarchic breeze" which is Gershom Scholem's true legacy.

The Bible and Politics

RIFAT SONSINO

THE BIBLE, AS IT HAS BEEN WIDELY RECOGNIZED, is one of the main pillars of our Western culture. Through translations into over two hundred languages, it has had a notable impact on our literature, social mores and religious thinking. For those who consider it the repository of the divine will, it is the major source of wisdom capable of addressing the human condition, irrespective of time and place. Many have sought to discover the Scriptural message by applying the methods of exegesis (i.e., reading the meaning *out* of the text) or, at times, by turning to eisegesis¹ (i.e., reading foreign ideas *into* the text.) Yet, even those who resorted to the latter technique believed that they were not distorting the original meaning of the text, but were, in fact, extricating from it their own projected ideas. Thus, the Bible containing “the words of the living God” remained “relevant” at all times and was often consulted for answers to existential problems.

The following examples, though different from one another in many areas, illustrate the way in which the Bible was used in order to promote a particular point of view in the religio-political world by claiming that the proclaimed message represents the true essence of Scriptures.

The Order of the Books

There is a difference between the Hebrew Bible and many of the versions with regard to the order of the Scriptural books. This discrepancy goes back to the sequencing of the individual books in the Septuagint, the Greek Bible. Though the Talmud (*BB* 14b) records a different order within the tri-part division of the Bible, Jewish tradition is consistent in placing the Torah at the beginning, followed by the Prophets and Writings. Scholars now generally agree that the Pentateuch was compiled during the Babylonian exile, about the 6th or 5th century BCE, the Prophets around 200 BCE and the Writings during the last third of the first century CE.

The Greek Bible, in addition to the 27 books of the New Testament, contains the following material: a) the Greek version of all of the texts in

1. On Biblical eisegesis, see Harry M. Orlinsky, “Nationalism-Universalism and Internationalism in Ancient Israel,” *Translating and Understanding the Old Testament: Essays in Honor of Herbert Gordon May*, ed., H.T. Frank and W.L. Reed (Nashville-New York, 1970), pp. 206–236; reprinted in his *Essays in Biblical Culture and Bible Translation* (N.Y: KTAV, 1974), pp. 78–116.

the Hebrew Bible; b) additional works originally composed in Greek, (e.g., The Wisdom of Solomon); c) the Greek version of Hebrew works left out of the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Maccabees I and II, Tobit, Judith); and d) Greek supplements to the books of Esther and Daniel. All of these books are grouped according to their literary genres and in a different order from the tri-part division of the Hebrew Bible: 1) The Law-the Pentateuch, 2) Historical books, 3) Poetic books (such as, Job, Psalms, Songs of Songs), and, finally, 4) Prophetic books.

The question is, why the change in the order of the books; in particular, why place the prophetic books at the end of the Canon?

If we take a closer look at the order, we see that in, the Hebrew Bible, both Genesis and Chronicles begin with the origin and development of the human race, and both texts conclude with the promise of redemption and return to the land of Israel. It is, indeed, remarkable that both texts use the same Hebrew verbs, *paqad* and *alah*, to express these ideas. In Gen. 50:24–25, we read: “At length, Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am about to die. God will surely take notice of you (*paqod yifqod*) and bring you up (*ve-healah*) from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob’” (NJV). In an editorial note, placed at the end of the book of Chronicles, we find the following statement: “Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: ‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he charged me (*paqod*) to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him. Let him go up (*ve-yaal*)’” (II Chr. 36:23).

It is well known that the Septuagint (LXX), prepared by Alexandrian Jews,² constituted the Bible of the Church from the early beginning. Notes J.W. Wevers:

When the Christian Church began to spread beyond the Jewish borders, it adopted the LXX as its Bible. By the end of the first Christian century, the Jews were reacting against the use of the LXX, partly because it was not based on contemporary forms of rabbinic exegesis, and partly because of Christian apologetics against Judaism based on faulty LXX renderings.³

The original text of the Greek Bible has not survived and all extant manuscripts of the Septuagint are of Christian origin, dating from between the 4th and 9th centuries. Though some fragments may be dated as early as 150 BCE, the best known manuscript of the LXX is the *Codex Vaticanus*, from about 350 CE. The ordering of the books in this Greek Bible is compatible with Christian theology and, most likely, was undertaken under its influence.

“Early Christianity,” wrote Samuel Sandmel, “set forth certain contentions about the character of Jesus the Christ and about the significance

2. The Pentateuch was translated by the middle of the 3rd century BCE.

3. IDB., vol. 4, p. 275.

of events in his career. These contentions were buttressed by an appeal to the Tanakh and by citations from it.”⁴ For example, Paul says that Jesus died according to Scriptures and rose according to Scriptures. According to Matthew, the virgin birth (1:22–23) fulfills Isa.7:14, whereas the summoning of Jesus from Egypt (2:15) fulfills Hosea 11:1, “out of Egypt I called my son.” Similarly, in Luke, Jesus is quoted as saying, “This day Scripture is fulfilled in Me” (4:24–30).

The sequencing of the books in the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint is reflective of two different theological perspectives. In the former, the ultimate hope is the redemption of the people of Israel and their return to the land of Israel, whereas in the latter, which is the Christian Bible, the expectation is the fulfillment of the divine promises uttered through the Hebrew prophets in the life of Jesus. In the words of Eissfeldt, in the LXX, “the prophetic writings directed towards the future provide the ending.”⁵ Those who believed that the prophets actually predicted the arrival of Jesus are, therefore, most likely the ones who placed the prophetic oracles at the end of the Hebrew Bible as a prelude to the New Testament.

This re-ordering of the books must have been done very early, perhaps by the year 60 CE, when Christianity welcomed so many Gentiles into its fold that it ceased to be entirely Jewish. It is noteworthy that the order of the Biblical books in English language Bibles published by Christians is still influenced by the order in the LXX and often by the same religious considerations.

Slavery During the Civil War

During the Civil War, both the abolitionists of the North and the pro-slavery people of the South “used” and “misused” the Bible in an effort to prove their point. A great controversy was created by Rabbi Morris Jacob Raphall (1789-1868). Born in Stockholm in 1798, Rabbi Raphall spent some time in England and came to this country in 1849 to become the rabbi of B’nai Jeshurun Congregation in New York City. He was a traditionalist, believing in the literal interpretation of the Bible and, as expected, he also preached against liberal movements and particularly against Reform Judaism.

On Jan. 4, 1861, President Buchanan declared a National Fast Day in an effort to mobilize national sentiments against the impending break-up of the Union. On that very same day, Dr. Raphall delivered his now famous, or infamous, lecture to his congregation entitled, “Bible View of Slavery.”⁶ In this meticulously prepared address he pointed out three

4. Samuel Sandmel, *Hebrew Scriptures* (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 537.

5. Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament* (N.Y. and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 570.

6. Ella McKenna Friend Mielziner, *Moses Mielziner (1828–1903) — A Biography with a Bibliography of his Writings* (New York, 1931), pp. 212–224. My appreciation to the American Jewish

things: a) slavery had existed since the earliest times; b) slaveholding was no sin; slave property was expressly placed under the protection of the Ten Commandments; and c) the slave was a person and had rights not conflicting with the lawful exercise of the rights of his owner. To soften the blow, the rabbi attempted to differentiate between Biblical slavery where, in his opinion, a slave was considered a person and slavery in the South where he appeared only as a thing.

Insisting that Scriptures recognized slavery as a valid institution, Raphall attacked the abolitionists for their misrepresentation of the Bible and for their agitation against the legitimate rights of the Southerners. Boldly, he stated:

My friends, I find, and I am sorry to find, that I am delivering a pro-slavery discourse. I am no friend to slavery in the abstract, and still less friendly to the practical working of slavery. But I stand here as a teacher in Israel; not to place before you my own feelings and opinions, but to propound to you the word of God, the Bible view of slavery.⁷

It must be acknowledged that Raphall was not wrong in claiming that the Bible recognized the institution of slavery (cf. Ex.21 and Deut.15). However, he infuriated his opponents when he declared that, according to Scriptures, it was no “sin” to own a slave, with the implication that it was no sin in the past and no sin in the present or future.

How dare you, (he exclaimed), in the face of the sanction and protection afforded to slave property in the Ten Commandments — how dare you denounce slaveholding as a sin? . . . And if you ask me, “Oh, in their time slaveholding was lawful, but now it has become a sin,” I in my turn ask you, “When and by what authority you draw the line? Tell us the precise time when slaveholding ceased to be permitted, and became sinful?”⁸

Bertram Korn notes that “this sermon aroused more comment and attention than any other sermon ever delivered by an American Rabbi.”⁹ In fact, Rabbi Raphall’s words were immediately given wide circulation and constituted a basic reference text for the abolitionists as well as for the pro-slavery people in the South.

The first Jewish answer to the sermon came from Michael Heilprin, a Polish-Jewish intellectual, and was published in the New York Tribune on Jan. 15, 1861,¹⁰ just eleven days after Raphall had spoken out. In this article, Heilprin expressed his “outrage” at the “sacrilegious words of the Rabbi.” He added, “I had read similar nonsense hundreds of times before.” He then went on to refute Raphall’s arguments one by one, pointing out that Jewish law was fluid, flexible and organic. It was, as he added, nonsense to pretend that everything preserved in the Bible retained a divine sanction.

Archives for providing me with a copy of this book.

7. Ibid., p. 220.

8. Ibid., p. 219.

9. Bertram Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1951), p. 17.

10. Reprinted in Mielziner, pp. 224-234.

Another Jewish answer to Dr. Raphall came from England, from Rabbi Gustav Gottheil, while a third reaction came from Rabbi David Einhorn of Baltimore, one of the outstanding rabbis of his time, who devoted to this four separate articles question in his monthly periodical, *Sinai*. There he argued that the Bible does not favor, approve of or justify the institution of slavery but simply tolerates it as an evil! A Jew, he added, must be concerned with the spirit of the Bible. "It has ever been a strategy of the advocate of a bad course," he wrote, "to take refuge from the spirit of the Bible to its letter."¹¹

Einhorn and those abolitionists who thought likewise encountered a difficulty with the Biblical text. They could not deny that the Bible recognized slavery. They attempted, therefore, to show that slavery was not in keeping with the humanistic spirit of the Bible. Thus, Einhorn wrote:

Can *that* Book hallow the enslavement of any race, which sets out with the principles that Adam was created in the image of God, and that all men have descended from *one* human pair? Can *that* Book mean to raise the whip and forge chains which proclaims, with flaming words, in the name of God: "break the bonds of oppression, let the oppressed go free and tear every yoke!"¹²

The answer is obviously, no! It is not in the spirit of the Bible to do that. And so with slavery

Einhorn's articles caused great troubles in Baltimore, where rioting broke out on April 19, 1861 between Unionists and Confederate sympathizers. Printing presses were destroyed, homes were set afire, and Rabbi Einhorn was then obliged to leave the city. He went to Philadelphia to become the rabbi at Kenneseth Israel Congregation and never returned to Baltimore.

A Revolutionary Bible in South America

The Bible as a whole can be approached from different perspectives. It can be read as literature, studied as an historical document, or analyzed as a theological treatise. It can also be read as a running commentary on the liberation of the oppressed. This is precisely what is done by the "theology of liberation" developed by leftist Roman Catholic scholars in Latin America in the last ten to fifteen years. A powerful expression of this approach is found in a Bible translation prepared by Catholic scholars in Chile in 1972. It is called *La Biblia para Latino America (Biblia Pastoral)*.¹³ Published in Spain, it carries the imprimatur of Manuel Sanchez B., Archbishop of Concepcion, Chile. It has already gone through twenty-two editions¹⁴ and millions of copies have been sold in South America.

11. Quoted by Korn, *American Jewry*, p. 20.

12. Idem.

13. *La Biblia para Latino America* (Madrid: Ediciones Paulinas/Verbo Divino, 2nd ed., 1972).

14. Dated 1979. My thanks to Rabbi Leon Klenicki for showing me this version.

The themes of "liberation past and present" and concern for the poor permeate all the commentaries and footnotes. For example, regarding the Decalogue we read: "in an industrial civilization it is necessary to promulgate legislation that will make people free." On Moses' attempt to gain his people's freedom, a footnote adds: "In light of Biblical teaching, we may find an aspect of spiritual liberation in every effort exerted on behalf of human dignity, in the fight of all developing nations trying to secure their economic independence. . ." Following the Jubilee Law of Lev. 25, we find this statement: "This law is against economic liberalism which permits one to get rich by hoarding the means necessary to others. It also condemns the laws of international commerce which always favor the more developed nations."

Furthermore, one of the characteristics of this Bible is that it contains contemporary photographs (some in color) and explanatory notes aimed at encouraging political struggle. In fact, as J.R. Brockman indicates, "Much of the attack against the Latin American Bible seems to stem rather from the pictures, 39 of them, than from the text itself."¹⁵ For example, in the section of the prophetic texts, there is a picture of Martin Luther King as well as of Brazil's crusading Bishop Helder Camara. In the first 20,000 copies of the Bible that were prepared for export to Cuba, there is a picture of a political rally with banners reading, "Long live our Socialist revolution," and a caption at the bottom stating "The believer participates in political life and searches, under any regime, for the society which gives dignity to all." There is a picture of a poor woman nursing a child and leading another by the hand with the caption: "Why do we accuse God, when it is mankind that has all the sources available to help their brethren!" There is also a picture of New York City accompanied by lines from Revelation 17 and 18, "Come, I will show you the big city. All have become prostitutes with her. And in her is found the blood of the martyrs."¹⁶ The comment suggests a condemnation of capitalism as an economic system. In another picture we see a dark-skinned man in a crowd shouting a protest. The caption states: "A people's liberation was the beginning of the Bible."¹⁷

The reaction to this Pastoral Edition was mixed. Chilean Archbishop Manuel Sanchez, who gave his imprimatur, readily admitted that some of the captions or comments were rather strong but he believed that the liberation theme placed the Bible in a contemporary social context and was, indeed, in line with recent Christian pronouncements. Similarly, Archbishop Jaime Navarez of Neuquen, Argentina, told his people: "I wish everyone to have this Bible." The version also received praises from Arch-

15. James R. Brockman, "The Bible as 'Subversive,'" *America*, 135, (Nov. 1976): 348. See also "The Battle of the Bible," *Newsweek*, (Nov. 8, 1976): 110.

16. This picture does not appear in the 1979 edition.

17. This picture, too, has been removed from the 1979 edition.

bishop Vicente Zaspé of Santa Fe as well as the bishops of Chile who lined up behind Manuel Sánchez.

On the other hand, Argentina's military government quickly banned the controversial Bible. An Argentinian publication, *Gente*, called it "the work of Marxists and subversives." As the result of these pressures, the book was withdrawn from many stores. Criticism also emerged from among the clergy. Most Rev. Ildelfonso Sansierra, the former Archbishop of Buenos Aires, denounced the Bible as an international Communist plan with the intention of winning over the people of Latin America, as he put it, "not under the sign of the hammer and sickle, but under the sign of the cross." Agreeing with this evaluation, the Archbishop of La Plata, Antonio Plaza, and the Archbishop of Paraná and the military vicar, Adolfo Tortola, banned the Bible in their jurisdictions.

The publication of this Bible and the reactions that it engendered make it clear that the interpretation of Scriptures is never just a religious issue, but often has political and social overtones. This is to be expected, for the Bible deals with ideas, values and priorities. As such, it touches the lives of many people, eliciting from them various responses which are, at times, even contradictory in nature.

The three examples cited above show how misleading it is to assume the homogeneity of the Bible. With the possible exception of the unity and spiritual nature of God, it is difficult to find concepts or institutions that have remained static and constant during the 2000 years of religious creativity represented by Scriptures. The Bible, it needs to be stressed, is a library of books, an anthology of religious ideas, embodying, at times, even mutually exclusive ideologies. To understand its message properly it is necessary first to study the text within its own context, then to become aware of how it was viewed by later generations and, finally, what it means to us today.¹⁸

This approach not only represents a more accurate description of Biblical literature but will also generate a higher respect for it, inasmuch as it will point to the continuous creativity of our forefathers, in their attempt to commit to writing their understanding of God.

18. For these three levels of understanding see the review essay by Robert Gordis, "The Torah, A Modern Commentary: A Rich Feast for Mind and Spirit," *Congress Monthly* (Feb./Mar. 1982): 21-22.

The Aggadic Tradition

HOWARD SCHWARTZ

I

THE CONTINUITY OF JEWISH LITERATURE extends across the entire period from the biblical era to the present, unbroken. The legends of the Bible are the foundation on which this tradition has been built, each generation upon the preceding one. The books of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha¹ are modeled directly on the books of the biblical canon, from which the former were excluded, and the latter were written afterward. The legends of rabbinic literature, known as the Aggadah, assume a biblical context within which they elaborate on unfinished aspects of the biblical narratives, such as the evil intentions of the builders of the Tower of Babel, the childhood of Abraham, or how King David evaded the Angel of Death. Since these episodes are not reported in the Bible, the aggadists sought out these solutions themselves, working on the assumption that the missing information is implicit in the biblical narrative. According to tradition, these elaborations belong to the Oral, or Unwritten, Law, which was transmitted on Mount Sinai at the same time as the Torah and is regarded as being part of the legacy that Moses received during forty days and nights. But, as will become apparent, they are, in fact, the creations of the longing and imagination of succeeding generations, each of which contributed to these Jewish myths, so that they subsequently continued to evolve. The form and style of the legends of the early rabbinic literature serve as models for the legends of the late rabbinic literature and the Kabbalah, which also emerge out of a context of biblical commentary.² As a result, a pattern was established in which subsequent genres of post-talmudic literature tend toward a generally exegetical model. This remained the case until the appearance of later midrashim, such as those found in *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* (8th-12th cent. C.E.) and *Sefer Hayashar* (13th-15th cent. C.E.), which utilize a narrative mode more like that of the Bible, while incorporating material derived

1. See R.H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. Although the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha were excluded from the canon of sacred Jewish texts, their intentions were fully religious in nature. They were never far away from the sacred city, camped outside the gates.

2. Ezekiel's vision of a *Merkavah*, a divine chariot, and a central talmudic passage (B. Hag. 14b) about four sages who entered Paradise and only one, Rabbi Akiba, who emerged in peace, serve as the models for the *Hekhaloth* texts of *Merkavah* Mysticism, a particular category of texts which Gershom Scholem identifies as post-talmudic and pre-kabbalistic.

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largely from prior rabbinic collections, such as the Talmud and the Midrash.

The exacting form of the Aggadah does inhibit somewhat the narrative freedom of the legends it relates, while replacing this freedom with a unique structure capable of assimilating a wide range of material, from matters of interpretation to imaginative reports about immense jewels seen at sea.³ This form permits, as well, the distinctive voices of individual rabbis to be distinguished in their teaching. Yet whatever narrative inhibitions are inherent in the aggadic format, they are ultimately set free in the folklore that flourished in the Middle Ages and was the first secular Jewish literature. Here the form of the folktales was blended with the perspective, but not the style, of the legends of the Talmud and Midrash, choosing instead a flowing style like that of a storyteller. This folkloric style is also far freer and less self-conscious, and, of course, less polished than the biblical model, which often reads as if engraved in stone.

The legends and styles of all of these previous periods — the biblical, aggadic, kabbalistic, folkloric, and hasidic — are utilized as models by modern Jewish authors such as S.Y. Agnon, M.J. Berditchevsky, I.L. Peretz, and I. B. Singer. These authors, and many other modern Jewish writers, have discovered new ways to embellish and utilize the old myths, which seem to retain their primal power no matter how many times they are retold. Often these authors draw on a modern stylistic and intellectual perspective while doing this, which in itself brings the legends into a new dimension. The result is a literature that is as much a product of the aggadic tradition as are the legends of the Midrash or the myths of the Kabbalah. For while these modern authors utilize these traditional forms and genres in markedly individual ways, the essential vision of the Aggadah remains unchanged, and in general they retain a tone that is essentially reverent.

The fact is that the process of the evolution of a myth or legend continues each time it is retold. There is even evidence of this evolutionary process taking place at the earliest stages of Jewish literature, involving myths and legends of Genesis. For it is a firm premise of biblical scholarship in this century that many of the myths found in Genesis existed orally at least a thousand years before they were written down. In most cultures the transition from an oral to a written tradition is a dramatic change that

3. "Rabbi Yohanan was sitting and lecturing: 'In the future the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring jewels and pearls the size of thirty cubits square, twenty ells in height and ten in width, and will place them at the gates of Jerusalem.' And one disciple sneered at him: 'We do not even find a jewel as large as the egg of a turtle dove and you say we shall find jewels of such sizes?' Thereafter it happened that the same disciple was on a boat on the high sea, and he saw angels who sawed jewels and pearls the size of thirty ells square, boring holes in them twenty ells in height and ten in width. He asked them, 'For whom is this?' And they answered: 'The Holy One, blessed be He, will place them at the gates of Jerusalem.' When he returned he said to Rabbi Yohanan: 'Lecture, Rabbi, for all you said is true, as I have seen it for myself!'" (B. *Bab. Bat.* 74).

tends to regard the written material, after only a few generations, as sacred and eternal in its written form. The inevitability of the evolution of myth, which is presumed in an oral tradition, is replaced with a belief in the permanence of the written form. Such a belief also characterizes the Jewish attitude toward the books of the Bible. Yet, paradoxically, the oral ethic that enabled mythic transformations to take place was also retained. This apparent contradiction was resolved by the recognition of two separate but related traditions: the written and the unwritten. While the text of the Written Law was sacrosanct, the Oral Law was not. It was this conscious retention of the older oral dimension, then, that distinguishes the Jewish religious and literary traditions from others, and was responsible for creating a situation in which it remained possible for the central myths to continue evolving even after they had been written down.

Eventually, some of the oral traditions were preserved in writing, usually when they were in danger of otherwise being lost, or to prevent the formation of competing sects, each claiming that the Law as they had received it was the authentic version. As a result, it is possible to follow this mythic evolution in texts, although much scholarly debate continues as to their precise dating.⁴ A representative example of the kind of evolution that takes place between the biblical source and its aggadic retelling is the legend of the City of Luz. There are four passing references to Luz in the Bible, but it is the first one that supplies its attributes as a place unique in the world — one of the Gates of Heavens — for it was there that Jacob had the dream of the ladder that reached into heaven, with angels ascending and descending on it (Gen. 28:12). The remaining biblical references to Luz do not shed additional light on the nature of the city. But, in the Talmud, there appears a legend linked to this city and which, in many ways, prefigures the kind of folklore eventually to emerge on a much wider scale in the Middle Ages:

And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz, which has remained its name until this day (Jud. 1:26). It has been taught: That is the Luz against which Sennacherib marched without disturbing it, against which Nebuchadnezzar marched without destroying it, and even the Angel of Death has no permission to pass through it. But when the old there become tired of life they go outside the wall and then die.

(B. *Sot.* 46b)

No further embellishment of this legend of a city in which the inhabitants remain immortal is found in the Talmud.⁵ Subsequent development appears in *Genesis Rabbah*. First the biblical passage about Jacob's dream (Gen. 28:19) is quoted in the context of an exegetical discussion, creating the first link between the Luz of Jacob and the one referred to in the previ-

4. In the case of *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, for example, it has been variously dated as originating between the 8th and 12th centuries C.E. In addition, it is generally recognized that much of its material is based on earlier sources.

5. The likely reason that Luz was identified as a city of immortals is that Luz also refers to the one bone in the body which never decomposes.

ously quoted talmudic passage. Then the legend is taken one step further:

Rabbi Abba ben Kahana said: "Why was it called Luz? — Because whoever entered it blossomed forth into meritorious acts and good deeds like a *luz* (nut tree)." The Rabbis said: "As the nut has no mouth (opening), so no man could discover the entrance to the town." Rabbi Simon said: "A nut tree stood at the entrance to the city." Rabbi Lezar ben Merom said in the name of Rabbi Phinehas ben Mama: "A nut tree stood at the entrance of a cave; this tree was hollow, and through it one entered the cave and through the cave the city."⁶

Note how Rabbi Lezar embellishes a detail newly added to the tale by Rabbi Simon. Taking the name of the town as a nut tree, (an almond tree, the literal meaning of *luz*), he postulates it as the symbol of the city, and places it at the entrance. While it is possible, of course, that this embellishment was part of an earlier tradition that Rabbi Simon was merely recalling, it appears equally possible that the description of the nut tree at the gates of the city is an example of the kind of mythic evolution of which we have been speaking. Certainly the further development presented by Rabbi Lezar, quoting Rabbi Phinehas, takes this motif one step further, embellishing the role of the nut tree: "this tree was hollow, and through it one entered the cave and through the cave the city." Regrettably, this attractive and enticing motif of a city of immortals, almost fairy tale in nature, was not developed any further until the late medieval period, where it is the subject of a Yiddish folktale about a quest to the city of Luz.⁷ However, the notion of a boundary that the Angel of Death cannot cross appears in the Zohar (4:151a), referring to the Land of Israel as a whole rather than to the city of Luz: "It is the Destroying Angel who brings death to all people, except those who die in the Holy Land, to whom death comes by the Angel of Mercy, who holds sway there." This gradual and meandering kind of development is characteristic of the aggadic tradition, whose evolution is not unlike that of living creatures in this respect. At the same time, this makes reading the Aggadah a treasure hunt in which these kinds of gems lie scattered everywhere in the rich midrashic literature.

II

To illustrate the process by which midrashim evolve and develop, accruing and incorporating new material and variants, the tradition concerning the death of Cain serves as an excellent example. Since the biblical narrative of Cain is unfinished, the rabbis were left to resolve the story in both a moral and a literary sense. Using the tradition of the Oral Law as

6. *Gen. Rab.* 69.8.

7. See "David Hamelech's Matoneh" in *Dos Buch fun Nissyonoth* (Yiddish), edited by Israel Osman, (Los Angeles, 1926). The modern Hebrew author Yakov HaCohen has written a play based on this legend, *The City of Luz*.

their justification, and supporting their interpretations with biblical proof-texts, the rabbis embellished the tale of Cain and Abel in many respects. They filled in the sketchy details of the births of the two brothers,⁸ the mystery of the origin of their wives,⁹ the conflict between the two,¹⁰ the murder of Abel by Cain,¹¹ the burial of Abel,¹² and the punishment and ultimate fate of Cain. It is the final aspect of the legend that is the particular focus of this discussion.

The end of the biblical narrative about Cain describes his punishment by God, and concludes by attributing to Cain the founding of the first city.¹³ After Cain has been cursed to become a *ceaseless wanderer on earth* (Gen. 4:12) he protests the severity of the sentence, and has it modified (Gen. 4:13-15).

Of particular interest to the rabbis was the nature of the sign by which God had marked Cain, to signify and protect him in his wanderings. One of the earliest midrashim speculating on this sign appears in *Genesis Rabbah* 22:

And the Lord put a mark on Cain (Gen. 4:15). Rabbi Judah said: "He caused the orb of the sun to shine on his account." Said Rabbi Nehemiah to him: "He caused the orb of sun to shine! Rather, He afflicted him with leprosy." Rab said: "He gave him a dog." Abba Jose said: "He made a horn grow out of

8. The midrashim trace Cain's seemingly innate evil character to his conception, which they attributed to the serpent, who is said to have fathered Cain with Eve, while Adam was the father of Abel. Thus, all generations have descended from the seed of Cain or of Abel and his brothers, such as Shem (see 1 Chronicles 1:1). The seed of Cain was believed to have manifested itself in the persons of Ishmael and Esau, while Isaac and Jacob were descended from the seed of Shem (*Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, chap. 21).

9. In the midrash it is stated that Cain and Abel each were born with twin sisters, who served as their wives, plus one other sister, born with Abel as his twin. "Rabbi Joshua ben Karchan said: 'Only two (Adam and Eve) entered the bed, and seven left it, including Cain and his twin sister, and Abel and his two twin sisters' (*Gen. Rab.* 22:2).

10. The nature of the conflict is thus portrayed in *Genesis Rabbah*: "About what did they quarrel? 'Come,' they said, 'let us divide the world.' One took the land and the other the movables. The former said, 'The land you stand on is mine,' while the latter retorted: 'What you are wearing is mine.' One said, 'Strip,' the other retorted, 'Fly.' Out of this quarrel *Cain rose up against his brother Abel and slew him* (Gen. 4:8) . . . Judah Berebbi said: 'Their quarrel was about the first Eve (Lilith).' Said Rabbi Aibu: 'The first Eve had returned to dust. Then about what was their quarrel?' Said Rabbi Huna: 'An additional twin was born with Abel, and each claimed her. The one claimed: "I will have her, because I am the firstborn" while the other maintained: "I must have her because she was born with me" (*Gen. Rab.* 22:7).

11. There was general agreement that Cain killed Abel with a stone although Rabbi Simeon said that he killed him with a staff (*Gen. Rab.* 22:8).

12. Since no one had previously died, there was no precedent for burial. Furthermore, the ground was reluctant to accept Abel's body. In some versions it is said that a sparrow, burying its mate, demonstrated the principle of burial, and in others it is said that Abel's body remained unburied until after the death of Adam. It was possible to bury Adam because, according to another midrash, the dust from which he had been formed had been gathered from the four corners of the earth (*Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, chap. 21).

13. A late midrashic collection, *The Chronicles of Jerahmeel*, states: "Cain was the first to surround a city with a wall, for he was afraid of his enemies" (24:2).

him." Rabbi Levi said in the name of Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish: "He suspended His punishment in abeyance until the Flood came and swept him away."

Of these five alternative accounts¹⁴ of the nature of the mark of Cain, the version that most took in the popular consciousness was that of the horn, which was said to be located on his forehead. The reason for this should be apparent — the horn signified Cain's essentially savage nature, and thus identified him as a wild beast among men. Although it was not apparent at first, the horn was to play an essential role in the most widely accepted account of the death of Cain, which first appears in *Midrash Tanhuma*, as follows:

Lamech was Cain's grandson of the seventh generation, and blind. When Lamech went hunting his son would guide him, holding his hand, and tell him when he saw a beast. Thereupon Lamech would draw his bow and kill it. Once he saw a horn between two mountains. "I see an animal's horns!" he exclaimed, and Lamech shot and killed it. But when they went to take it, the child cried out, "It is my grandfather, Cain!" In grief Lamech beat his hands together; accidentally he dealt his child a blow to the head that killed him.¹⁵

This account soon became the best-known version of the manner of Cain's death, although variants of the legend existed. There was, for example, the one proposed originally by Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish, wherein Cain was seen to have found his death along with the other victims of the Flood. But this punishment was unsatisfying in that it did not single out Cain. The rabbis strongly felt that a decisive punishment for him was called for, to set a precedent for future murderers.

Another version of Cain's death appears in the apocryphal *Book of Jubilees* (4:31). Here Cain is said to have been killed when his house fell on him. Just as he had killed Abel with a stone, so was he killed by the stones of the house that collapsed on him.

Midrash Tanhuma proposes that, at the time of his punishment, Cain's final destiny was in being transformed into the Angel of Death and remaining such until he was killed at the hands of Lamech, at which time "Lamech became transformed into the Angel of Death, thus fulfilling the

14. A sixth account appears in *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* (chap. 21): "Master of the Universe! Cain pleaded, 'My sin is too great to be borne (Gen. 4:13), for it has no atonement!' This confession was accounted to him as repentance. 'Moreover,' he continued, 'one will arise and slay me by pronouncing Thy Great Name against me!' What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He took one letter from the twenty-two letters in which the Torah is written, and set it upon Cain's arm like a tattoo, that he should not be killed." Another version has it that the letter was affixed to his forehead. Note that this version amplifies on the nature of the death that Cain fears — brought about by the power of the Ineffable Name rather than by the brutal revenge of those aware of his crime. The unexpected notion that Cain's reply to God was reckoned as repentance can be found in *Pesikta Rabhati* (50:5), as follows: "Adam met Cain and asked: 'My son, how is it that your case turned out this way?' Cain replied: 'I resolved repentance and was delivered.' When Adam heard this, he began to strike his own face, saying: 'Is such the great power of *Teshuvah* (repentance)? I did not know!'"

15. *Midrash Tanhuma*, *Ber.* 11.

prophecy, *If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech shall be avenged seventy and sevenfold* (Gen. 4:24)."¹⁶ It seems likely that this version combines two earlier legends. In one of these, Cain's punishment must have consisted in his being transformed into the Angel of Death, and as such is a powerful origin legend to explain how this terrible angel came into being.¹⁷ The second legend concerns Cain's fatal encounter with his descendant Lamech in the seventh generation.¹⁸

The first principle of supporting a midrashic interpretation is to link it to a biblical source. Since there is no description of the death of Cain in the Bible, the rabbis turned to the enigmatic passage that is quoted in part in the previous midrash. It reads in full as follows:

And Lamech said unto his wives:
 Adah and Tsila, hear my voice;
 Ye wives of Lamech, harken unto my speech;
 For I have slain a man for wounding me,
 And a young man for bruising me;
 If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,
 Truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold (Gen. 4:23-24).

In *Midrash Tanhuma* this passage is seen as foretelling Lamech's metamorphosis into the Angel of Death. But most other commentaries on this passage find in it substantiation for the death of Cain at the hands of Lamech, linked to the curse of Cain (Gen. 4:13-15). In this reading, "I have slain a man for wounding me" refers to Cain, who has wounded Lamech by being the ancestor responsible for the curse that hangs over his descendants, and "a young man for bruising me" refers to Lamech's son, Tubal-Cain, who has bruised his father by making him responsible for the death of Cain. Admittedly, this reading seems forced, but this kind of literary license is characteristic of the aggadic tradition. In addition, the

16. Ibid., *Ber.* 11.

17. Note how the continuity of the existence of the Angel of Death is provided for by Lamech taking over that role after Cain, although this legend does not suggest how long he was condemned to this incarnation, or who succeeded him in the role.

18. It is interesting to note that one interpretation which the rabbis did not propose is that Cain's curse to be "a fugitive and a wanderer" was intended to last for all time. While the seed of Cain were seen as a plague to future generations, the Midrash does not carry Cain beyond the generation of the Flood. But this motif of the eternal wanderer that is suggested by the biblical curse of Cain is fully developed in the Christian legend of the Wandering Jew, and it seems possible that the legend of Cain served as a prototype to that of the Wandering Jew. According to this legend, as Jesus (Yehoshua ben Yosef) was carrying the cross on the way to Golgotha he stumbled and came to rest against the house of a Jew, Ahasuerus, who emerged from it and ordered Jesus to leave, perhaps out of fear of being implicated as a sympathizer. Jesus replied by saying that he would leave, but that the man would wander until he came back, i.e., until the Second Coming. This initiated the legend of the Wandering Jew, who subsequently appeared in tales told in every generation and in many places. Like Cain, he was a man marked for his sin; in this case the sign that marked him was his inability to die. His role came to be that of one who witnessed all that came to pass, and also that of a man obsessed with the search for his death. The story, "The Wandering Jew," by David Slabotsky, relates how he finally succeeded in this quest.

midrashic rule requiring a proof-text to support a claim makes it the only possible passage to provide the necessary biblical link.

Thus it can be seen how the passage in *Midrash Tanhuma* ingeniously utilizes two existing traditions associated with Cain — the passage concerning Lamech and the midrash asserting that Cain's sign was a horn. The enigmatic passage about Lamech provides the framework for the narrative of the death of Cain, as well as the conclusion of the tale. The horn is the motif around which the whole tale turns. Together the two fragments provide the necessary link to tradition that gives the midrash its authentic ring. In addition, this version of Cain's death is satisfying in a number of other respects.

First of all, this midrash brings the tale of Cain to a conclusion, which was of no small importance to the rabbis, who had a strong sense that every tale should have a beginning, a middle, and an ending. In its biblical form the story of Cain was simply incomplete. At the same time, by extending the story seven generations, the principle was established of carrying the biblical story into the future, where the biblical archetype can occur in a new form that still permits recognition of the old. Such a system made possible identification with a biblical patriarch or king and, at the same time, made possible incorporating personal dreams and fantasies into the Aggadah.

Next, this midrash provides a unique and appropriate death for Cain, especially fitting in that his slayer is his own descendant. This is a kind of poetic (or, perhaps, midrashic) justice, since Cain slew his own brother. Note, however, that neither Lamech nor his son, Tubal-Cain, can be held responsible for Cain's death, since Lamech was blind and Tubal-Cain only a child who mistook his ancestor for an animal — which, in essence, Cain was. It is a case of perfect justice: Cain receives his due from his own offspring, but they are innocent of any crime, though they have in this way repaid Cain for making them accursed, and in this coincidence can be seen, of course, the hand of God. Also, note the presence of Cain's name in that of the descendant who assists in killing him, hinting that Cain, in a sense, killed himself.

Finally, this midrash aptly sets the precedent that a killer shall be slain for his crime, and does not succumb to the alternative interpretation that Cain repented and his repentance was accepted, on the grounds that there had been no previous murder for him to realize the import of his action.¹⁹ This reading also supports the biblical injunction that the punishment for murder be death,²⁰ and avoids setting the precedent that exceptions to this rule be permitted.

19. In *The Chronicles of Jerahmeel* (24:3) reference is made to "Lamech, who slew Cain in the seventh generation, after Cain had confessed his sin, repented, and his punishment had been suspended until the seventh generation." This late version combines Cain's repentance with the legend of the slaying of Cain at the hands of Lamech.

20. Lev. 24:16–17.

It is not surprising, then, that this version of the death of Cain, which became the predominant one, served the needs of the rabbis and accurately reflected their views of the need for, and the manner of, justice and retribution. All subsequent versions of this midrash, such as the following version from the late text *Sefer Hayashar* merely embellish aspects of this midrash, and present the details in an improved narrative form, but do not change in it any essential way:

And Lamech was old and advanced in years, and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, and Tubal-Cain, his son, was leading him one day while they were walking in the field, when Cain, the son of Adam, advanced towards them. Then Lamech was very old and could not see much, and Tubal-Cain his son was very young. And Tubal-Cain told his father to draw his bow, and with the arrows he smote Cain, who was yet far off, and he slew him, for he appeared to them to be an animal. And the arrows entered Cain's body although he was distant from them, and he fell to the ground and died. And the Lord requited Cain's evil according to his wickedness, which He had done to his brother Abel, according to the word of the Lord which he had spoken. And it came to pass that when Cain had died, that Lamech and Tubal-Cain went to see the animal they had slain, and they saw, and behold Cain their grandfather was fallen dead upon the earth. And Lamech was very much grieved at having done this, and in clapping his hands he struck his son and caused his death.

(*Sefer Hayashar*, 2:26–31)

Thus it can be seen that this midrash of Cain's death solves two problems at the same time: first it explicates a difficult passage about Lamech, and at the same time it solves the narrative and moral problem of the ultimate fate of Cain. And despite its intentional usage of existing sources, it still manages to be an original creation of its own. It is in this spirit that the midrashic tradition has been carried into the present in the writings of S.Y. Agnon, I.L. Peretz, and others.

III

The continuity of style and mode that links the legends of the Talmud and Midrash is preserved in the kabbalistic period.²¹ But because of the kabbalistic imperative to perceive the Scriptures from a mystical perspective, changes in the meaning of concepts and legends are common, and are often of a radical nature. A revealing illustration of this kind of transformation can be found by considering the evolution of the concept of the *Shekhinah*.

In the talmudic and midrashic literatures the term "*Shekhinah*" designates the personification of God's presence in the world. This use of the term is usually translated as "Divine Presence," and it refers to God's nearness to mankind, as in this homily of Rabbi Akiba: "When a man and wife are worthy, the *Shekhinah* dwells in their midst; if they are unworthy, fire consumes them" (*Tosefta* B. *Sotah* 17a). In this context the term designates one of the names of God, whose use implies the nearness or presence of

21. The kabbalistic period can be defined as extending from the writing of the Zohar in the 13th century C.E. until the debacle of Shabbatai Sevi in the 1660s.

God. At this time no attempt was made to suggest that the *Shekhinah* was in any way independent of God, or to imply that the term referred to a feminine aspect of the Deity. However, the seeds for such an interpenetration are contained in legends such as this from the *Mekhilta*:

Whenever Israel went into exile, the *Shekhinah*, as it were, was with them. When they were exiled to Babylon, the *Shekhinah* was with them; when they were exiled to Elam, the *Shekhinah* was with them, as it is said, *And I will set My throne in Elam* (Jer. 49:38).²²

In this context the presence of the *Shekhinah* is intended to affirm that God remained true to Israel, and accompanied them wherever they went. But in the kabbalistic period that tradition was expanded to assert that the *Shekhinah* was the personification of the feminine presence of God. In this expanding myth, the *Shekhinah* became increasingly independent and, at the time of the destruction of the Temple, chose to leave her consort, God, and remain instead with her children, Israel. The exile of the *Shekhinah* is related in this legend from the Zohar:

When the Sanctuary was destroyed and the Temple was burnt and the people driven into exile, the *Shekhinah* left her home in order to accompany them into captivity. Before leaving, however, she took one last look at her House and the Holy of Holies, and the places where the priests and the Levites used to perform their worship. . . . So in the days to come, when the Holy One, blessed be He, will remember His people, the community of Israel, the *Shekhinah* will return from exile first and proceed to her House, as the holy Temple will be rebuilt first.²³

Elsewhere in the Zohar the independent existence of the *Shekhinah* is further developed:

At the destruction of the Temple the *Shekhinah* revisited all the spots where she had formerly dwelt, and wept for her habitation and for Israel who had gone into exile and all those righteous ones and saints who perished there. God thereupon said to her: "What aileth thee?" . . . The *Shekhinah* replied with tears: "Seeing that my children have gone into exile and the Sanctuary is burnt, what is there left for me that I should linger here?" And the answer of the Holy One, blessed be He, was: *Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come back from the land of the enemy* (Jer. 31:16).²⁴

The presence of the *Shekhinah* among the exiled Israelites is vividly portrayed in the following passage:

When Israel were journeying in the wilderness, the *Shekhinah* went in front of them, and they on their side followed her guidance. The *Shekhinah* was accompanied by all the clouds of glory, and when she journeyed the Israelites took up their march. And when the *Shekhinah* ascended, the cloud also ascended on high, so that all men looked up and asked: *Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke?* (S.S. 3:6). For the cloud of the *Shekhinah* looked like smoke because the fire which Abraham and his son Isaac

22. *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael* 14.

23. Zohar II: 134a.

24. Zohar II: 203a.

kindled clung to it and never left it, and by reason of that fire it ascended both as cloud and smoke; but for all that it was perfumed, with the cloud of Abraham on the right and with the cloud of Isaac on the left.²⁵

This last passage not only affirms the presence of the *Shekhinah* among the Israelites during the most archetypal exile of all, the wandering in the wilderness, but it also links the *Shekhinah* to the patriarchs Abraham and Isaac. The intention clearly is to project the concept of the *Shekhinah* as a mother-figure to all of Israel back into the biblical text. Certainly the identification of the *Shekhinah* with the Cloud of Glory, described in Exodus, that guided the Israelites during the day succeeds in doing just this, and the description of the cloud of smoke creates as well a connection to the sacrifice of the ram on Mount Moriah. The effect is to create a sense of the timelessness of Jewish history, in which the essence of all past events clings to the present like the smoke of the sacrifice to the Cloud of Glory.²⁶

The Kabbalists also discerned the presence of the *Shekhinah* in talmudic legends in which the term was not used, such as the following:

Resh Lakish said: "An additional soul is given by the Holy One, blessed be He, to a man on every Sabbath eve, and at the end of the Sabbath he takes it away from him" (B.Ber 16a).

In the kabbalistic period this extra soul was believed to signify the Sabbath Queen, one of the identities of the *Shekhinah*, who is said to descend every Sabbath eve, and remain present for the duration of the Sabbath.

With this kabbalistic initiation, then, the presence of the *Shekhinah* is fully injected into the tradition. It prepares the way for a series of visions and encounters with the *Shekhinah* in subsequent literature that are associated, in particular, with the Western Wall of the Temple, also known as the Wailing Wall.²⁷ In these kabbalistic and post-kabbalistic legends it is apparent that, at least from a mythological point of view, the *Shekhinah* has become an independent entity. Nevertheless, the *Shekhinah* was regarded at the same time as being an extension or aspect of the Divinity, which was, of course, necessary in order to uphold the essential concept of monotheism. True initiates of the Kabbalah were not disturbed by these apparent contradictions, but, for others, the danger of viewing the *Shekhinah* as a separate deity was recognized, and that explains why the study of the kabbalistic texts was not permitted until a man had reached his fortieth year, was married, and had received ordination. Only such a person was felt to be grounded enough in the tradition not to be overwhelmed by the kabbalistic metaphors, while younger, more vulnerable men might well be led astray. Such dangers are portrayed in the tale of

25. Zohar II: 176b.

26. See Marc Bregman, "Past and Present in Midrashic Literature" in *Hebrew Annual Review*, vol. 2, 1978, pp. 45–59.

27. See, for example, Zev Vilnay, *Legends of Jerusalem*, pp. 165–166, quoting from *Shivhei ha-Ari*.

the Baal Shem, retold by Meyer Levin as “The Book of Mysteries,” in which the son of Rabbi Adam is devoured by the force which he sets free in his insistence on studying the Book of Mysteries, which is clearly intended to be a kabbalistic text. S. Ansky’s drama, *The Dybbuk*, also portrays a young yeshivah student who is driven to madness and death after attempting to explore the kabbalistic mysteries on his own. Nor does the evolution of the myth of the *Shekhinah* end in the kabbalistic period. The implications of the Exile of the *Shekhinah* were expanded in the 16th century by Rabbi Isaac Luria, as explained below. And in the 19th century Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav told the tale, “The Lost Princess,” which hints at an identification of the *Shekhinah* with Jung’s concept of the *anima*. And this implicit link between *Shekhinah* and *anima* is made explicit in the story, “The Palace of Pearls,” by Penina Villenchik.

In addition to being dangerous, the texts of the Kabbalah are often obscure. The ten *Sefirot*, which are the emanations of the Divinity, are the foundation on which most kabbalistic thought in the Zohar is based, and are themselves highly metaphorical and esoteric. This fact made it difficult for the essential kabbalistic principles to be transmitted beyond very limited circles. Even after the “discovery” of the Zohar by Moshe de Leon, who attributed his masterly pseudepgraphical work to the 3rd century talmudic sage Simeon bar Yohai, the spread of its influence was still limited and exclusive. In the 16th century, however, a reformulation of the essential kabbalistic creation myth appeared in the teachings of Rabbi Isaac Luria of Safed, known as the Ari.

The creation of the world in six days, with a seventh day for rest, as described in Genesis, had been recast in the Zohar into a far more complex system of ten stages of emanation, the *Sefirot*.²⁸ In each subsequent phase, the divine substance becomes more manifest, ultimately resulting in the existence of this world. In his reformulation of this myth, the Ari describes these emanations of the Divinity as vessels filled with divine light — the same light that existed after God said, *Let there be light. And there was light.* (Gen. 1:3), until the fourth day, when *God made the two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night, and the stars also* (Gen. 1:17). All of these emanations emerged from a single, unseen point, which is the highest and most remote aspect of the Divinity, known as *Ein Sof*, the Endless. These vessels set sail from above to below like a fleet of ships, each carrying its cargo of light. Then somehow — Lurianic doctrine is at a loss to explain why — the frail vessels broke open, split asunder, and all the sparks were scattered, like the dust of the earth and the stars of the sky. This breaking is known in Lurianic terms as the Shattering of the Vessels, and is the Lurianic equivalent of the Fall of Man. The linkage of the Creation with the Fall is intended to reveal them as part of a single

28. For more information about the ten *Sefirot*, see Gershom Scholem, “Emanation and the Concept of the *Sefirot*” and “Details of the Doctrine of the *Sefirot* and Their Symbolism” in *Kabbalah*, pp. 96–116.

process, for the Fall brought about a change in existence that was as profound as the changes that took place during the six days of Creation. As a result of the Shattering of the Vessels, the sparks of light that were contained in them were scattered everywhere in the world. The whole had split apart. The Fall had taken place.

But the mythic cosmology of the Ari does not conclude with the Shattering of the Vessels; it is far too concerned with the issue of restoration. Rather, it proposes that this was but the first in a two-stage process. And the second stage is that of restoration and redemption, or *Tikkun*. The Ari called this phase Gathering the Sparks, and in his view it was the destiny of the Jews to seek out and gather these scattered sparks, no matter how far they had flown and how well they were hidden. This process was described by one of the disciples of the Ari, Israel Sarug, in 1631:

Traces of the divine light adhered to the fragments of the broken vessels like sparks. And when the fragments descended to the bottom of the fourth and last world, they produced the four elements, and when all these became materialized, some of the sparks still remained within. Therefore it should be the aim of every Jew to raise these sparks from where they are imprisoned in this world and to elevate them to holiness by the power of their soul.²⁹

However, the Shattering of the Vessels not only provided a purpose for the Children of Israel, but also explained the exile of the *Shekhinah*, as formulated by the primary disciple of the Ari, Hayim Vital:

And behold, when the Temple was destroyed the *Shekhinah* went into exile among the *kelippot* (shattered vessels which have been reduced to mere shells), because the souls that had been exiled there no longer had sufficient strength — as a result of their sins — to free themselves. Therefore the *Shekhinah* . . . descended among them in order to gather in the soul-sparks . . . to sift them from the *kelippot*, to raise them to the sphere of holiness, and to renew them and bring them down again into this world in human bodies. Thus you may understand the mystery of the exile of the *Shekhinah*.³⁰

Note how well this myth not only expresses the essential aspects of the process of Gathering the Sparks, but also incorporates the concept of the exile of the *Shekhinah*, as if these essentially separate myths had always been integrally related. This is one more example of how each subsequent phase of the aggadic tradition recreates the past phases within itself, and thus reinterprets the past for the present generation.

This mythic explanation of the fallen state of the world, combined with a vision of redemption involving the combined efforts of Israel and the *Shekhinah*, rapidly took root in the Jewish world and, more than any other myth or legend, was responsible for imbuing a kabbalistic fervor among the masses, which led directly to the rise of the false messiah Shabbatai Sevi in the 17th century, and led, as well, to the emergence of Hasi-

29. Quoted in Gershom Scholem, *Shabbatai Sevi*, pp. 40–41.

30. Hayim Vital, *Sha'ar haGilgulim* 166:15, quoted in Gershom Scholem, *Shabbatai Sevi*, p. 43.

dism in the 18th century, founded by Israel ben Eliezer, known as the Baal Shem Tov.

A close examination of the traditional elements that the Ari used in his mythic retelling includes the biblical version of Creation, the Fall, and the entire kabbalistic system of emanation. Yet it emerges as a new myth, one of the last to be added to the Jewish tradition, and it quickly became an integral part of it. For like all new myths, it recombines elements of the old in an original fashion, thereby transforming it into something new. That this myth of the Fall and restoration should find such wide acceptance came about because of its apparent links to past traditions, which made it possible for it to be recognized as having been implicit in the earlier texts. It had grown from within, and although it presented a new transformation, the seeds were still recognizable. From this perspective the myth of the Ari existed all along, but awaited the Ari to be revealed.

Also present in the Ari's creation myth, but not as apparent at first, are centuries of longing for the coming of the Messiah, to which the Gathering of the Sparks must undoubtedly be linked. Both the Ari and Hayim Vital were regarded in their time as precursors of the Messiah, if not as Messiah ben Joseph, who precedes the coming of Messiah ben David and prepares the way. This messianic tradition has its roots in the Bible, as well as in all the subsequent sacred literature. But in the kabbalistic period the myth of the Messiah grew to epic proportions not unlike that of the growth of the myth of the *Shekhinah*. Detailed legends describe the Messiah's abode in Paradise, known as the Bird's Nest, and the legends of his coming are filled with vivid details of tremendous conflict and upheaval before the Messiah initiates the End of Days. And this kabbalistic impetus is also incorporated into the Ari's myth with the belief that, when the sparks have finally been gathered, they will be restored to the vessels which will themselves have been restored, and the world will then be returned to its primordial condition. This, of course, is the very result of the coming of the Messiah, and it is in this way that the Ari's myth reflects this messianic longing.

Thus, it should be apparent that certain myths of the Jewish people were transmitted to succeeding generations with their power undiminished. Each generation had to seek out its own means of expressing the myth, in a manner appropriate to its own time. The successive generations of Jewish literature can be seen as ongoing attempts to report the transformations of the primal myths in their own age. It is this mythic dimension of the religion which has played an immense role in its perpetuation in our own age.

IV

In addition to the emergence of the Zohar and other kabbalistic literature in the Middle Ages, there was also the blossoming of folklore. Stressing narrative, and open to the influences of the folklores of surrounding

cultures, these folktales and fairy tales, lacking the sacred seal of the previous literatures, were forced to fend for themselves, as a new kind of oral tradition, and to await the first serious collectors of Jewish folklore, like Micha Joseph Berditchewsky and S. Ansky. To a considerable extent the subjects of this folklore are identical with those of the earlier sacred literatures. There are a multitude of legends about the ten lost tribes, the miracles of the Prophet Elijah, and the births, deaths and wonders of the greatest rabbis, heroes, holy men, and scholars. There are also many tales of the supernatural, in which demons and *dybbuks* play important roles.

This medieval folklore differs from the preceding sacred literatures, however, in that it is not restricted by the ethical prerogative of the talmudic and midrashic literatures, nor is it tied to proof-texts. Instead, it is attracted to the miraculous and imaginative, as well as to tales of quests and other great undertakings. A moral element is still present, but it is the kind of clearcut moral found, for example, in *Aesop's Fables*. Above all, it is not a self-conscious literature, as is that of the Aggadah of the Talmud and Midrash, nor is it concerned with the mystical (in contrast to the supernatural) dimension as is the Kabbalah. In this respect it is not unlike the kinds of folklore that emerge naturally out of every culture, much of it borrowed from other cultures, and recast in a Jewish context.

Here are to be found complete cycles of legends about King David and King Solomon, and a substantial body of tales in which Elijah appears in disguise to provide some form of salvation. It is apparent that these folktales reflect a simpler, more fundamental grasp of religious elements, while at the same time they are more grounded in a realistic perspective, except in the kinds of enchanted tales in which it is recognized that a flight of fancy is desired. Here, too, can be found those aggadic motifs which appealed to the popular imagination, for the inclination to embellish and extend existing myths and legends is just as intense as it is in the sacred literatures. At the same time, it is apparent that the powerful influence of the Oral Law, which lends its sacred aura to the legends of the Talmud and Midrash, is considerably diminished in medieval folklore. And while one consequence of this absence of the sacred aura is a distance that enters into the narration of the tale and which does not presume that the tale is necessarily true, there is, at the same time, even greater liberation of the imagination than in the earlier literatures, now that its foremost commitment is no longer primarily to the affirmation of the sacred tradition.

Unfortunately, while we can be certain that the primary sacred texts have been carefully preserved, it is apparent that a great deal of folklore, which was never written down, has been lost. In fact, considering its exclusion from the sacred tradition, it is remarkable that so much of this oral tradition has survived. Among the best collections of this literature are M.J. Berditchewsky's *Mimekor Yisrael*, which is available in English, and the still untranslated collection, *Sefer Ma'asiot* (The Book of Tales), by Mordecai ben Yehezkel.

In the late Middle Ages there also appeared a religious folklore, religious in that its origins came from within rabbinic circles. Its themes, of course, are primarily concerned with spiritual and moral issues, although moral themes are also prevalent in the secular folklore. A good example of such religious folklore is *Shivhei ha-Ari*, the tales about the Ari, Rabbi Isaac Luria, which have been translated into English as *In Praise of the Ari*. This collection includes tales about the miraculous birth of the Ari, his teachings and his miracles, including that of transporting a king who was asleep in his palace to a pit in a field, where he was forced to affix his seal to a proclamation protecting the Jews. There are, in addition, tales about *dybbuks*, demons, and legends current in his time. Hayim Vital is also the subject of a volume of tales, modeled on those of the Ari, known as *Shivhei Rabbi Hayim Vital*. It is in this period that the secular and sacred literatures flow closest together. And the subsequent hasidic literature, which turned to the tales of the masters of Safed for their model, maintains, to a considerable extent, the practice of incorporating secular legends, especially when it is possible to reinterpret in them a religious dimension.

V

The last major phase of Jewish literature produced before the 20th century is that of Hasidism. The movement's founder, the Baal Shem, gathered around him disciples, known as Hasidim, with whom he shared his teachings, which emphasize the need for *kavanah*, or spiritual concentration, in prayer in particular and in every other kind of activity. As a result, the Hasidim actively sought out spiritual enlightenment, attempting to perceive the presence of the Creator or the *Shekhinah* in every situation. In this active approach to religious experience the Hasidim are not unlike the Sufis or, especially, the Zen Buddhists.³¹ Hasidism also emphasizes the mystical dimension, as do these other sects, and in this the hasidim should be seen as the spiritual heirs of the Kabbalists, and especially of the teachings of the Ari. Above all, Hasidism was a product of messianic longings and the sense that, in the Baal Shem and some of the later hasidic masters, figures of the stature of the sages of the past had come again into the world. This belief provided a renewed sense of meaning, and enabled the Hasidim to bring about an extraordinary reanimation of the process of spiritual growth in Judaism. Although this dimension of Hasidism began to decline in the 19th century, the abundance of teachings and tales that was produced in a relatively short period is equal to that of any earlier period. And the possibilities of spiritual expression that they demonstrate set in motion a process which has revived and inspired Judaism in the present century.

After the death of the Baal Shem, his scribe of eight years, Rabbi Dov Baer, published *Shivhei ha-Besht*, a volume of legends and myths that had

31. See Harold Heifetz, ed., *Zen and Hasidism*.

become associated with the Baal Shem.³² Many of these tales, which concern the birth, childhood and later life of the Baal Shem, have parallels to earlier rabbinic literature, notably to the legends of the Ari that are reported in *Shivhei ha-Ari*. The master-disciple relationship of the Baal Shem and his Hasidim, about whom volumes of tales were produced after their deaths, was duplicated in subsequent generations. The result is a rich literature of over three thousand texts, some of which are available in English in Martin Buber's *Tales of the Hasidim* and in Meyer Levin's *Classic Hasidic Tales* as well as in other collections. These texts are a product of the sacred literatures of the Bible, Talmud, Midrash, and Kabbalah, but what is less apparent is the influential role of medieval folklore. For hasidic tales incorporate elements of the narrative similar to those found in folktales, as well as the miracles, enchantments, witches and demons that are so familiar in folklore and fairy tales. Imposed on this archetypal sub-structure are figures of angels and spirits, a supernatural aspect of hasidic literature that is found in a great many tales.

In combining the sacred intentions of the Aggadah with the narrative freedom of the folktale, Hasidism produced a body of literature that is the direct result of the previous genres, sacred and secular. If there is any one key to understanding the Hasidim, it is this profound link to the ancient tradition. There was the profound sense of dialogue with the past, as is suggested in these words of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, one of the key rebbes, as the hasidic masters were called:

Two men who live in different places, or even in different generations, may still converse. For one may raise a question, and the other who is far away in time or in space may make a comment or ask a question that answers it. So they converse, but no one knows it save the Lord, who hears and records and brings together all the words of men, as it is written: *They who serve the Lord speak to one another, and the Lord hears them and records their words in His book* (Mal. 3:16).

And from the present perspective it does appear that some of the hasidic rebbes, including the Baal Shem, Rabbi Levi Yizhak of Berditchev, and Rabbi Nachman, were among the most inspired figures of Jewish history.

While less well known than the tales of the Baal Shem, the subsequent hasidic literature is one of the richest of the aggadic tradition. It consists of the tales of what Buber calls the Early Masters and the Later Masters, as well as a voluminous exegetical literature. Although it is obvious that the tales of the Baal Shem served as the primary model for these tales of the subsequent masters, the format is flexible enough so that the individual qualities of the various rebbes easily emerge. The effect of groups of tales about individual rebbes is that they create a kind of legendary history based on anecdote that is both attractive in itself, as well as being a valuable resource for the modern Jewish writer. Much of the compelling quality of

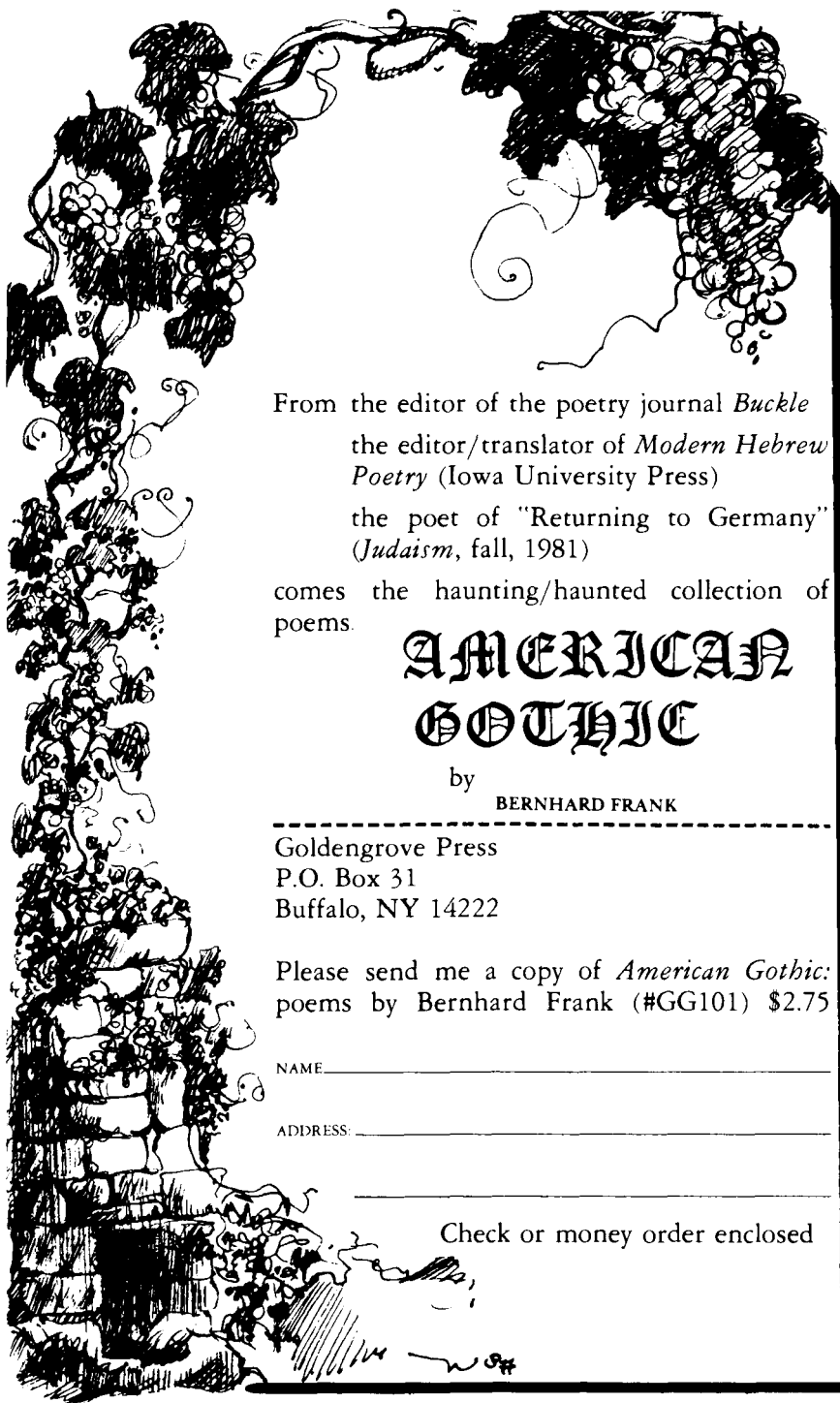
32. *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, translated and edited by Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome R. Mintz.

both these sources and the modern retellings derives from the fact that the rebbe is an ideal subject for an anecdote. As a result, it is not uncommon for a modern writer to invent a hasidic rebbe rather than turn to a historical figure. What is apparent, above all, is that the love of legend demonstrated by the Hasidim has easily transmitted itself into the creative imagination of our own time, where hasidic lore has been recognized as one of the most accessible and moving of all Jewish traditions.

In the stories of the modern Jewish authors who have utilized these aggadic legends, the source lies like a seed in the center of the fruit of the modern creation, while the modern element has, in a sense, fused with the ancient. Much of the power of this modern literature derives from the reader's experience of this fusion. Whether the starting point is a myth, legend, ritual, or even a halakhic ruling, there is inevitably a process of both preservation and transformation that takes place.

For the authors of such works there is also the opportunity to participate in the evolution of the archetypal myths that serve as the foundation of Western culture and are, as well, at the center of Judaism. For it is important to recognize, above all, that the process that is taking place is essentially mythic, and that it is the fundamental, compelling quality of myth which explains the momentum of this evolution over the centuries, even to this day. It also helps explain the lasting attraction of the tradition, even to those who do not necessarily identify with its religious goals.

The aggadic tradition, then, is more than the preservation of the past, as symbolized by the coffin of Joseph which the Israelites carried beside the Tabernacle in the wilderness. It is a continuing process of the reintegration of the past into the present. Each time this recurs, the tradition is transformed and must be reimagined. And despite the inevitability of this metamorphosis, the essential aspect of the tradition remains eternal and unchanging. This is how the Jewish people view life in this world. On one level it is a blessing that has been given, and on another it is transitory and illusory. This dual awareness exists at all times, for neither this world nor the world to come can be ignored. In contrast to the Hindu world view, for example, which dismisses this world, and seeks to escape from the cycle of rebirths, or that of the skeptics, who insist that nothing exists beyond this world, this blend of the worldly and the eternal is the essence of the Jewish vision. In aggadic terms this correspondence is the natural harmony of the earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly Jerusalem, for the one cannot exist without the other.



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Jerusalem, A Portrait

MORDECAI ROSHWALD

TO ANALYZE AND DEFINE THE CHARACTER OF

a city may be as difficult and elusive as to explore and fathom the character of an individual. To be sure, some cities, like some individuals, are relatively simple and do not require much probing to be understood. The industrial cities emerging from the achievements of the Industrial Revolution — whether in its early stages or later on — generally belong in this category. So does many a modern city, as well as a planned one. In the case of the industrial city, it is the dominance of the technological-economic role which is so visibly imprinted on it and determines its nature. As for the modern city, which may also be an industrial one, it is the manifold functions, but nothing more than the functions, that are assigned to it, that make its character transparent. The planned city is but the translation or transposition into reality of the ideas of the planner which, being made plain by him, make the city plain to the observer.

The other cities, however, those which have grown over centuries, remain complex, elusive, distinctive. Their personalities vary, and produce different responses from various individuals. Some people admire Venice, others prefer Florence. Some are overwhelmed by London, while others are charmed by Oxford and Cambridge. Some love Paris, while others are enchanted by Toledo. Needless to say, one's liking or admiration need not be restricted to just one city. Just as one may have several good friends, who are quite different from one another, so one can grow attached to such diverse cities as London, Paris, Geneva, Toledo, Siena, Verona or Naples.

It is easier to become fond of a city than to explain the reason for the sentiment, which obviously is partially rooted in the character of the object of one's attachment. Yet, the difficulty is not unsurmountable, and a variety of arguments can be adduced to explain and justify one's sentiment. The uniqueness of its geographical position, the beauty of its architecture, the graceful peculiarity of its means of transportation are the most obvious characteristics of Venice which affect the admirers of that city. The splendour of the Champs Elysées, the weight of history that is expressed through palaces, churches and monuments that are adorned by the ribbon of the Seine and softened by gardens, may be pointed out by the admirer of Paris as the basic justification for his attitude. Without going into further examples, it is clear that the character of any impressive city is rooted in a combination of factors peculiar to it. To unravel that

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character one must look at all of the traits which make the whole what it appears to us. Let us attempt to do so in respect to Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is not the most beautiful of cities. Its geographical setting is less impressive than is that of Geneva in Switzerland or Vancouver in British Columbia. It certainly is not a city which can provide sophisticated entertainment, comparable to London or Paris. Architecturally, though it can boast of some impressive structures, ranging from the Mosque of Omar to the modern Hebrew University campus on Mount Scopus, it is not in a class with Venice or Florence. Its distinctive character and excellence have to be sought elsewhere.

One outstanding feature of Jerusalem is the blend of living civilizations which fill it. Within roughly one square kilometre, the Old City contains Moslem, Christian, Armenian and Jewish quarters. Outside the Old City walls there are mosques, synagogues and churches of a variety of denominations and sects, including the Abyssinian and the Russian Orthodox. The Jewish population of Jerusalem, which is numerically dominant, includes a variety of sub-ethnic groups, as well as diverse religious quasi-sects, which tend to cluster in separate quarters and thus maintain and exhibit their peculiar styles of life. The Me'ah She'arim neighborhood of the ultra-orthodox is one such example, the Bukharan is another. In some cases, the inhabitants of an area may have changed, but the imprint of their original founders remains visible in architecture and street outline. Thus, Jerusalem strikes one as a mosaic rather than a melting-pot, and the mosaic is quite colorful. The blend of nationalities, religious denominations, languages, sects, lends the city the quality of an anthropological laboratory: a macrocosm of ways of life is reduced here to the microcosm of a city. If it was said about ancient Rome *urbs fiebat orbis*, the city became the world, the statement can almost be reversed in respect of Jerusalem: *orbis fiebat urbs*, the world became a city.

Then, there is the historical dimension to Jerusalem. Its history, as is well known, goes back to the Jebusite city, then on through the Biblical and Second Temple epochs, the Roman and Byzantine era, to Arab and Moslem times, and now to our day. There are two sides to this historical dimension of the city which, though they are distinctive, are mutually related. One is an academic pursuit, namely, the exploration of archeological testimony, digging for the material evidence of days past, which has been going on for decades, and most ardently of late, and which, every so often, has produced important revelations. Some of the recent finds, like the southern approach to the Temple, or the deep layers of the Western wall, are impressive even to the layman, as they reveal the grandiose architecture and the ingenuity of an ancient epoch. But archeology in Jerusalem is not merely archeology, not only an academic pursuit. There is another significance to the uncovered monuments. Any material evidence of the past has present relevance and actuality. The remnants from two or two and a half millennia ago are felt as another justification for the

right of the Jews to the city and to the land. Archeology is charged with politics, the past propels the present and makes the present reciprocate by digging for the past with even greater ardour. Thus, for the Jews in Israel, the antiquities are both old and new. One could virtually say that the older they are the more relevant and actual they become. Perhaps this is the ultimate meaning of living history, which in Jerusalem is also experienced as living archeology.

However, the peculiarity of Jerusalem is not restricted to its historical dimension and the awareness and relevance of archeology and history. Jerusalem is also a religious city, or, more exactly, a city of religion. The three monotheistic religions — Judaism, Christianity and Islam — look at Jerusalem as a holy city, linked to divine presence, revelation, miracles. The religious aspect of the city, or at least of some parts of it, can be felt even by those who do not share in any of the formal beliefs. One can feel not only the air of religiosity emanating from the diverse believers and their places of worship, but one can sense the quest for the absolute as one overlooks the hills around Jerusalem — notably the desert panorama visible to the east of Mount Scopus and south-east of the Old City. There is something in the austerity of the desolate landscape which inspires the quest for absolute and eternal truth, which informs monotheistic-moralistic religions, as it may have been typical of polytheistic creeds to look for inspiration “under every green tree.” This yearning for the absolute, which is felt so strongly in Jerusalem, is enhanced not only by the natural setting, but also by the stone structures which dominate the city. Monumental buildings and humble houses, alike, are built of hewn stone. One can pass by such humble buildings at intervals of decades and perceive no change at all. (By contrast, some of the houses built of more perishable material in southern parts of Jerusalem in the fifties and sixties already show signs of premature aging.) Thus, in a way, Jerusalem is an old city which does not age. The permanence, the immortality, are symbolized and enhanced by the rock out of which Jerusalem is built. The historical city appears to be also the city of the absolute, the ahistorical, the permanent and eternal.

While the quest for the absolute may seem incompatible with historical awareness, for history is implanted in the sequence of time, while religious yearning is essentially atemporal, the two co-exist peacefully in Jerusalem and even in the minds of the people conscious of this duality. The co-existence may be attributed, in general, to the complexity of the human mind, which transcends logical paradoxes. Man, at one moment, is capable of regarding himself as a link in the sequence of history, as well as a mere dot on the immense canvas of national existence that transcends an individual lifetime; and then, in the next moment, he may sense in himself the intimations of immortality and of timelessness which express themselves in his contact with the absolute and unchanging divinity. In the particular case of Judaism, the historical awareness and the quest for

the absolute are explicitly and deliberately linked with one another. The God of the Bible, the creator of the universe, is conceived as a perfect and immutable Being, beyond and above history: "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past" (Psalm 90:4). Yet God also manifests Himself in history. He did so at Mount Sinai and on other occasions, and He controls the history of mankind and of Israel, rewarding the righteous nations and punishing the wicked ones. History, as the prophets insisted, is the story of God's judgment. The Absolute acts through the transient, the timeless reveals His will in the sequence of time. Significantly, the divine redemption of Israel and of the world, prophesied by Isaiah and others, is projected for "the last days" or, in the Hebrew phrasing, for "the end of days," that is to say, it is to occur both in time and at the end of time. The absolute and the passage of history are intertwined in the Israelite, and subsequent Jewish, consciousness.

The Western Wall and the attitudes that it generates is, perhaps, the best example of the blend of historical awareness with the meta-historical religious quest. To the Jewish believer the Wall is a visible remnant of the past and its glory — a time of fulfillment which, by its very nature, is both religious and national. This historical memory is intertwined with divine grace which made that past possible. Yet, the Wall is not only a memorial. It is not only a reminder of the acts of God in the past, but also a testimony to the presence of God here and now. It provides a contact with God, the unchanging and the Absolute. It suggests the meta-historical and timeless elements of religious experience. The Jews praying at the Wall address God now, and the individual requests that are put on scraps of paper and inserted into the crevices of the mighty Wall are a testimony to the belief in the divine presence and grace, a belief in a God who is accessible to the ardent outcries of the individual.

The agnostic Jew may reflect that the Western Wall is no more than a wall of the western side of the court of the former temple, where animal sacrifices were offered daily, a practice that he is happy to see relegated to ancient times — a sentiment possibly shared by some of the religious in the privacy of their thoughts. He may remember that the impressive structure is associated with King Herod, a cruel despot, decried by the pious of his own times. Yet, these reflections will not obliterate a sense of awe for the Wall. For the agnostic, but conscious, Jew realizes that the maimed monument, a mere wall of a court of a temple which is no more, has been the focus of the national and religious yearnings of his people, with their distinctive way of life and moral commitment, for two millennia, and those feelings have turned the Wall itself into a magnificent Temple of the Spirit, have changed the stones into an ethereal substance. The alchemy of emotions can perform such a transformation. Moreover, though himself a skeptic, he may sense the quest for the absolute, for an answer to questions which he finds unanswerable, a quest which again is focused on and symbolized by the Wall. A witness to all this human yearning, the

huge Wall becomes larger than its physical dimensions, it turns into a monument which cannot be measured any more by human yardsticks. It is no longer a relic of ancient times, but becomes a symbol of the timeless and the absolute, or at least of the quest for the absolute.

The aura of religious belief, or whatever residue of awe it may leave in the heart of the agnostic, pervades Jerusalem, and makes it a peculiar city, indeed — both for the peculiar people and for the followers of other monotheistic religions, whose roots are in the Bible. Yet, this does not mean that Jerusalem is only an other-worldly, spiritual city. It is not. It is also a living city, following its various activities in diverse forms and styles, as dictated by the various occupations and national moulds of the inhabitants. One of the ways to the great mosques, which is also one of the ways to the Western Wall, leads through an Arab *sug*, or market, which bustles with commercial activity in its own peculiar way. Nor are the surroundings of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre free from brisk tourist business. Yet, the bustle of commerce is not really jarring. For a city is a place alive, and if “man doth not live by bread only,” as Jerusalem reminds us, he cannot live without bread either. Indeed, had Jerusalem been only a reminder of other-worldly yearnings and a place of historical monuments, it would not have been itself. Its peculiarity is that it exhibits the sense of history and the religious quest in the midst of normal daily existence, in the context of regular economic and social activity. This activity has its own rhythm, and the yearnings and memories follow their distinctive pace. And yet, the diverse elements are not entirely separate, for to the sensitive and perceptive there are moments when they lift their eyes from their merchandise and business and look at an ancient arch, at the massive stones, at the silent hills or at the mysterious desert. Business is then measured by the yardstick of a long history and by the still larger measure of eternity.

This meeting of the practical and the super-natural, of the current and the past, of the daily and the eternal, may well be another characteristic of Judaism. This, perhaps, is one reason for the attachment of Judaism to Jerusalem as its living symbol, as its ideal habitat.

“Upper City” Then — “Jewish Quarter” Now

Review-Essay by SALAMON FABER

Ha-Ir ha-Elyonah shel Yerushalayim — the Upper City of Jerusalem. By NAHMAN AVIGAD. Jerusalem. Hebrew University, 1980. 265 pp.

JERUSALEM HAS BEEN A CENTER OF ARCHEOLOGICAL research since 1863, though historians have been utilizing data from excavations to study the city's past since pre-historic times. Of special interest in this context is the “City of David,” the former stronghold of the Jebusites which King David conquered and declared to be the capital of his consolidated kingdom. Since no contemporary data of a literary type exist regarding the topography and boundaries of this city, scholars anticipated that archeology might provide some of the answers. Indeed, in the course of the past century, an extensive literature has developed which reflects an ongoing controversy between “minimalists” and “maximalists.” While the former argue that David's capital was limited in size to a narrow pass of land sloping down to the Gihon spring (or pool) south of the Temple Mount, the latter maintain that the area was much larger, extending in the direction of the Western Hill, which runs parallel to the Mount.

Ha-Ir ha-Elyonah . . . offers a comprehensive record of archeological work in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem in the years 1969-1978. According to the maximalists' perception, this area would constitute the extended section of the “City of David,” or part of it. Approximately 2000 years ago, the “Upper City” of Jerusalem stood on this hill. Over the centuries, following the destruction of the Second Temple, Jews made their homes here in the vicinity of, and directly facing, the Western Wall (*ha-Kotel ha-Maaravi*) “from where the Shekhinah never departed” (*Tanhuma*, ed. Buber, *Shemot* 10). Readers will recall that, in 1948, in the course of Israel's War of Independence, the Arab Legion exiled the Jews from their ancestral homes in the Jewish Quarter and subsequently demolished many of its buildings, including its fifty-eight Houses of Worship and/or Study. Upon regaining sovereignty over united Jerusalem in 1967, the government of Israel determined that rehabilitation of the demolished sites required immediate attention. However, before

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rebuilding the area, the policy called for comprehensive “in-depth” exploration. It was assumed that such large scale programs of excavations were bound to result in unambiguous answers concerning the factual extent of the “City of David,” as well as clarification of other vexing historic problems.

Dr. Avigad’s team of archeologists, historians, photographers, numismatists, experts in Hellenistic art, etc. were entrusted with the task of “digging.” Their painstaking efforts are depicted with spellbinding fascination in the work under review. Literally and figuratively, this record is in the nature of a journey into the unknown with astounding results. Readers should bear in mind that members of the team did their daily work alongside architects, engineers and builders, whose responsibility it was to put up new buildings as soon as sites were cleared of rubble left by the Jordanians. There is an added bit of excitement in the details of last minute arrangements to avoid friction between diggers into the past and builders of the future.

We now turn to conclusions. To begin with, strata from pre-“Upper City”-“Jewish Quarter” times throughout the area prove beyond doubt that the “City of David” was, indeed, limited in size in the earlier centuries of the Davidic kingdom. Its walls did not enclose any territory on the Western Hill. No concrete objects, such as pottery, coins, seals, or remains of dwellings were unearthed here to indicate the existence of stable settlements before the 8th century B.C.E. Specific localities mentioned in the Bible, e.g. Mishneh (2K 22:14) and Makhtesh (Zeph. 1:11) came into existence during the rule of Amaziah (798-780 B.C.E.), or his successor Uzziah (780-740 B.C.E.), presumably as a result of demographic growth in the “City of David.” That process was probably accelerated by an influx of refugees to the Jerusalem area from the Northern Kingdom, following its destruction by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.E. Furthermore, people may have fled to the fortified capital from other localities in the Kingdom of Judah during Sanherib’s march of conquest in 701 B.C.E.

Avigad’s team came upon indisputable evidence that a wall was erected, encompassing the enlarged city, in the era of Hezekiah (720-692 B.C.E.). A section of this wall — about 65 meters long and 7 meters wide — was identified as part of the city’s northern defense line. This is one of the most important finds in the history of archeology dealing with Jerusalem, since it resolves the argument between minimalists and maximalists and makes clear Josephus’ references to a wall from the period of the First Temple. Nearby the wall area were also found arrow heads dating from the sixth century B.C.E., presumably identifiable remnants of battles against Nebukhadnezar’s invading troops in 586 B.C.E.

Communities on the Western Hill were virtually wiped out at the destruction of the First Temple, and the area remained desolate during the next four hundred years, that is during the Persian and early Hellenistic periods of Jerusalem’s history. The small community of returnees

from Babylonian exile, following king Cyrus' famous proclamation in 538 B.C.E., settled on land more or less parallel to the original "City of David." They clustered around the rebuilt Temple, a modest enterprise in comparison with the former structure of King Solomon. Many years later, ca. 455 B.C.E., Nehemiah, the newly arrived emissary from the Persian court, finally succeeded in repairing and buttressing the wall around the small city.

However, the entity which constituted the Second Jewish Commonwealth at that point in Jewish history was a limited, isolated and insignificant province of the Persian realm. Nor did its position change substantially after it came within the orbit of Hellenistic influences. Only with the rise of the Maccabees to power in the middle of the second century B.C.E. were conditions altered in terms of growth and development. Jerusalem became again a metropolis, politically, culturally and economically. Its population increased, requiring living space on the Western Hill. The Hezekiah Wall, with adjoining fortification towers, was rebuilt along original lines. Interconnecting links between the "First Temple" and the "Hasmonean" walls, as well as traces of other structures and palaces, were discovered in the course of current excavations.

Jerusalem reached phenomenal dimensions of growth during the rule of King Herod (73-04 B.C.E.) who, despite his record as a deceitful despot, subservient to Rome, left an ineradicable mark as a great builder upon the city and upon the Land of Israel. Monumental projects inspired by his initiative, like the reconstructed Temple, Caesarea, Sebastia and Masada still evoke admiration. Archeological findings in the "Upper City" reflect his influence in matters concerning daily living, especially his predilection for Greco-Roman styles. Citizens of renown, like members of the Temple hierarchy and wealthy merchants, lived here in spacious homes, surrounded by luxury and comfort. Accommodations to cultivate cleanliness were first rate. Household utensils, some imported from abroad, others produced by local artisans, were of exquisite quality. Decorative motifs, like mosaics and frescoes, abounded. These facts are depicted in *Ha-Ir* . . . with corresponding visual representations (pp. 83-139).

According to Josephus, who is quoted verbatim on p. 137, the "Upper City" was overrun by Roman soldiers one month after they destroyed the Temple, on the 8th of Elul in the year 3830 (70 C.E.). Indiscriminate killing, mass destruction of property, followed by vengeful incineration of whatever was in sight, were the orders of the day. This tragic sequence of events was unearthed in the course of current excavations. As Avigad's archeologists searched the uncovered ruins, they came upon heaps of tumbled walls, fallen ceilings, shattered utensils and all sorts of items deliberately thrown into the flames and still covered with black soot. An especially vivid picture of the tragedy was encountered in a house named in this record "*ha-Bayit ha-Saruf*" — the Burned House. When people learned of its exposed remains, they came to look.

They were overwhelmed with an awareness of personally witnessing the burning of the Temple and the destruction of Yerushalayim . . . [T]hose fateful events survived in our national consciousness as a painful memory of something that took place 2000 years ago . . . but now memory became visual reality . . . [P]eople experiencing this awareness wanted to take along a handful of ashes, a splinter of wood — anything that symbolizes the hurban . . . [I]t’s incredible to what extent long buried feelings can burst to the surface in such moments . . . (p. 123).

Among the unforgettable sights in the Burned House was the skeletal arm of a young woman clutching at a door handle, as if trying to escape at the last moment. Another item: a measuring unit engraved with the phrase “*Bar Katros*,” implying that the house belonged to a family named Katros. Sadly, this name brings to mind a satire in Tanaitic literature in which a number of Temple officials are mentioned contemptuously for using their offices for personal gain (*Tosefta Min.* 13:21) and Katros is among them. Avigad concludes this part of the account with the following comment:

This story depicts the most tragic and most fearful event in Jerusalem’s history . . . [I]t continues in our times — 2000 years later — while descendants of the slain build their new homes on top of the Burned House . . . [F]rom here one scans the Temple courtyard where Bar Katros once took part in services . . . [H]opefully, there will be no cause for satires in the future!

Sixty years after the destruction of the Second Temple, Jewish warriors lead by Shimon Bar Kokhba again revolted against the Roman oppression. Again, their aspirations for freedom were drowned in an ocean of blood and Jerusalem was turned into ruins. In its place, Emperor Hadrian built a new Roman city with forum, cardo, baths and pagan statues. Where the Holy Temple had stood, he erected a Roman temple to Jupiter. In order to blot out all memory of the Jewish past, this new city was named Aelia Capitolina, and Jews were forbidden to cross its boundaries on pain of death. This severe measure might at times be relaxed, as confirmed by a number of incidents in Talmudic sources from the 3rd and 4th centuries, e.g., about R. Yose praying in one of the dilapidated buildings (*hurvot*) in Jerusalem (T.B., *Ber.* 3a), about Shimon Kantarya discussing with a scholar his visits to the Holy City (T.J., *Ber.* 113d), about three scholars concerned with the question of the status of a certain species of tithes (*Maaser Sheni*) in Jerusalem (T.J., *Maaser Sheni* 54b). However, any attempt to restore an organized Jewish presence in the former capital was out of the question throughout the centuries of pagan rule, not to mention their Christian successors since Constantine the Great. The sole exception was a brief interlude during the rule of Julian the Apostate, 361-363 C.E., who, for political and state reasons as he perceived them, proclaimed, in 362 C.E., that Jews might rebuild the Temple. He even made arrangements to commence construction.¹

1. This interesting episode is dealt with in detail by M. Avi-Yonah in *The Jews of Palestine*; a

Incidentally, one reflects with astonishment on the deafening silence of both Talmud and Midrash regarding this matter, but this review-essay is not the place to say more on the subject.

Ha-Ir. . . contains a wealth of startling data with regard to archeological discoveries focusing on the post-Bar Kokhba pagan period (135-324 C.E.), as well as the subsequent period of Christian domination (325-638 C.E.). To start with, the territory of the "Upper City" remained desolate for a long time. Only a parcel of it, corresponding to the Armenian Quarter in our times, was used for garrisoning the Tenth Legion. This fact is borne out by the remnants of tools used by soldiers that were found in the vicinity. However, there is nothing else to suggest organized settlements at the time. The situation changed again when Christianity was declared the state religion of the Roman Empire. Policies were then initiated to transform the former capital of the Jewish State into a metropolis of Christendom, a center for religious pilgrimages with hospices, monastic orders and shrines commemorating important events in the history of the new creed, its saints and heroes. This program was launched by Constantine when he ordered the building of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and continued under his successors, reaching a record high during the rule of Justinian, the renowned Byzantine emperor, 563-627 C.E.

In the course of clearing an assigned area for reconstruction, Avigad's team, while examining the accumulated underground debris, came upon a section of a clearly recognizable Roman street. The area referred to is in the Jewish Quarter between its two parallel streets, Rehov ha-Yehudim and Rehov Babad, south of the bustling Arab bazaar. Following a carefully study of the uncovered building blocks and columns, it was concluded that the street fragment under scrutiny was once part of the renowned "Roman Cardo" — a broad thoroughfare stretching north-south in a straight line from the Damascus Gate to the area of Mt. Zion. Beautiful columns placed parallel at regular intervals, plus other features of inspiring architecture, marked it as a unique attraction. It is prominently depicted on the "Medva Map," which offers a detailed image of Jerusalem around the 6th century C.E. According to Avigad's interpretation of this map, the section of the Cardo discovered by his team was built in Justinian's time, as verified by many of its Byzantine characteristics. But the section of the Cardo north of the excavated area had been in existence since the time of Aelia Capitolina. Avigad suggests further that the original "Aelian Cardo" was extended southward, which meant restoration and resettling of lands which had been desolate since the destruction of the "Upper City," in order to enhance the image of new Christianized Jerusalem. A beautiful platform was now available alongside many new public buildings and private villas.

Political History from the Bar Kokhba War to the Arab Conquest (New York: Schocken, 1976), pp. 185-204.

The crowning glory of Justinian's architectural achievements in the Holy City was a structure called “Nea Church.” Not much was known heretofore about this structure, not even its location, except for references to it by contemporary chroniclers and pilgrims. Avigad's team deserve credit for its rediscovery. Early in the beginning stages of explorations, while digging a short distance south from the Jewish Quarter, they unearthed remains of a massive wall in an east-westerly direction. At that point, it was only conjectured that the discovery might be a fragment of a great edifice, but soon other parts of an architectural complex were found — huge cisterns, underground archings designed to support imposing structures above, connecting links between buildings, and remnants of other walls, all located at the southern end of the extended “Roman Cardo,” to the east of it. It is obvious from the existing remains that this edifice included many facilities, such as a house of worship and contemplation, a school, a hospice, and, possibly, a library. Topographic characteristics of the area required special engineering ingenuity to create space for all of the facilities. Apparently “Nea Church” was conceived on such a sophisticated scale that it commanded the attention of the most talented builders in the realm. That Justinian was initiator of the project had been confirmed by a dedicatory plaque in his honor, the discovery and deciphering of which caused much excitement.

Ha-Ir. . . is written in lucid Hebrew, and is not overloaded with technical terminology, which is most suitable for “armchair” archeologists. Its photographs and schematic drawings are of superb quality, though this reviewer respectfully suggests that a future edition of the work should include a legend identifying the symbols and numbers of the map of sites on p. 32.

Dr. Avigad's concluding lines (p. 258) expresses beautifully an Israeli archeologist's awareness of the profounder meaning of his work:

After ten years of building accompanied by archeological exploits, the Jewish Quarter bustles with new life, voices of children resounding on its streets . . . In the face of all this, one recalls the prophet's promise — raise a shout together, O ruins of Jerusalem! for the Lord will comfort His people, will redeem Jerusalem (Is. 52:9).

Making the Halakhah Viable

Review-Essay by THEODORE FRIEDMAN

Law and Religion. By ZEEV FALK. Jerusalem. Mesharim Publishers, 1981. 238 pp.

THIS VOLUME, THOUGH OF RELATIVELY SMALL compass, grapples with one of the basic problematics of Halakhah in our time: — the patent gap between the dominant values of contemporary Western civilization, internalized by most Jews, and those that presumably inform traditional Halakhah. The author views the problem within the wider framework of the relationship between law and religion with particular reference to Jewish religious teaching and experience. To this formidable task, Ze'ev Falk, Professor of Family Law at the Law School of the Hebrew University, brings a most impressive competence in fields as diverse as philosophy — Jewish and general — sociology, language and logic, and, to be sure, Halakhic jurisprudence. This reviewer's special focus of interest in the book and, presumably, that of the average reader is Prof. Falk's sustained effort to indicate and spell out in what direction the Halakhah must move if it is not to become an irrelevancy even to Jews committed to the Jewish religious tradition. In the process, he repeatedly jousts with current Orthodox interpreters of the Halakhah whose decisions, for the most part, remain immune, and deliberately so, to current social and moral values. Perhaps, with some homiletic license, one could apply to them the Talmudic dictum: "He who has only Torah, does not have even Torah."¹

But before taking up what this reader deems the central thrust of the book, he permits himself some observations on the author's methodology, the latter being a significant clue to his general approach. Now the Halakhic tradition, beginning with its earliest recorded statements, is multivocal on a wide variety of matters including, for example, an issue as crucial as the nature of the commandments. Are they to be constructed as divine decrees (*gezeyrot*) and hence to be fulfilled as such without undue inquiry as to their purpose or effect in human terms, or are they to be construed and fulfilled in the light of their purpose, explicit or implied? The controversy on the question reaches back to the Talmud² and persistent echoes

1. *Yevamot* 109b.

2. *Bava Me'zia* 115a, the controversy between R. Judah and R. Simon.

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of it are to be heard in the history of Jewish thought.³ Our author, in seeking to align the Halakhah with the social and moral values held by most Jews today, opts for the view that the commandments are to be interpreted in the light of their social and moral function.

Nor is this the only example of Prof. Falk's deliberate choice between possible alternatives offered by the Halakhic tradition even where such choice involves adopting an opinion put forward by one of the Talmudic Sages but eventually rejected by the Talmud and subsequent decisors. Thus, in discussing democracy and Halakhah, he writes: "the priest was said to act as an agent of the people rather than as an agent of God" (p. 49). While the Talmud debates the question,⁴ it concludes that the priest, in his sacerdotal role, represents God and not the people.⁵ Again, into this category of adducing evidence from a view ultimately rejected by the Talmud, one places the author's statement, "the incompetence of such (false) witnesses should not be applied to evidence given by them at an earlier occasion" (p. 129). Now this happens to be one of the six Halakhot of which the Talmud asserts categorically that the final Halakhah follows Abbaye and not Rava.⁶ And it is Abbaye who holds that a false witness is disqualified retroactively. Clearly, the author's method is heterodox (and for this reviewer the term carries no pejorative overtones). But, here, Prof. Falk might well appeal to the Halakhic tradition itself for warrant for choosing rejected opinions. Does not the Mishnah⁷ warrant the adoption of an opinion officially rejected at the time if a subsequent court should find grounds for adopting it?

Not only deliberate selectivity but growing experience, too, should be reflected in current Halakhah. Halakhic jurisprudence, like modern jurisprudence, relies heavily on a series of presumptions (*Hazakah*). In the Halakhah, some of these are clearly marked; other principles are essentially presumptions, though not specifically denominated as such. Now the question put by the author is: are these substantive rules of law or are they presumptions of fact based on experience and, hence, revisable in the light of growing experience? Orthodox interpreters of Halakhah take the presumptions that are enunciated in the Talmud as fixed substantive rules of law. Accordingly, their decisions increasingly widen the gap between law and life. How this rigid use of presumption results in

3. See, for example, Nahmanides' extended comment on Deut. 22:6. Even the oft-quoted Rabbinic statement (Genesis *Rabbah* 44:1) that the *mizvot* were given to Israel only for the purpose of their moral refinement, was subject to opposing interpretations. One school of thought held the statement to mean that the *mizvot* were a test to determine whether Israel would obey God's will. Another gave it the meaning reflected in our translation. Contrast Maimonides' interpretation of the Mishnah in *Berakhot* 5:3 with his statements in *The Guide to the Perplexed*, pt. 3, chps. 26, 31 on the same Mishnah.

4. *Yoma* 19a, b.

5. See Rabbenu Hananel ad *Yoma* 19a; also *Tosafot* beg. *Mee Ikka*, Ibid., 19b. Cf. also *Nedarim* 35b and Maimonides' *Hilkhot Nedarim* 6:5.

6. *Sanhedrin* 27a and elsewhere.

7. *Eduyot* 1:5.

decisions that violate a modern Jew's sensibilities, may be illustrated by a case brought some time ago before a Rabbinical Court in Haifa. A woman appealed to the court to compel her husband to grant her a divorce on the grounds that he consorted with prostitutes, a charge that the husband did not deny. The court rejected the woman's plea on the ground that (1) her husband might in the meantime have repented of such acts and (2) that according to a Talmudic presumption "a woman prefers to bear a double yoke (the marital status) to living alone."⁸ That is, a woman prefers any kind of husband to no husband at all. Though this statement by Resh Lakish is nowhere described as a presumption (*Hazakah*) in the Talmudic passages in which it occurs, it is repeatedly invoked as a basis for Halakhah, and is cited as such by the *Shulhan Arukh*.⁹

A legal presumption, Prof. Falk writes, is the distillation of experience. As experience changes, presumption must change accordingly. He cites a telling illustration of such change afforded by the Talmud itself¹⁰ in the law of the *Kofer Hakol* — he who claims out of hand that he owes nothing to the plaintiff who claims that he does. According to the earlier Halakhah, such a defendant was not obligated to take an oath to back his denial on the presumption that no one would be so brazen, in the presence of a creditor who had rendered him a service by lending him money, as to deny owing him anything. In time, this presumption apparently no longer reflected actual experience. Whereupon, Rabbi Nachman, a fourth century Babylonian Amora, ordained that a *Kofer Hakol* be obligated to take an oath to substantiate his denial. This reckoning with growing and changing experience as a factor in the Halakhic process obviously carries broad implications for the unfreezing of the Halakhah.

Prof. Falk's approach to the Halakhah is holistic. It is one which sees the tradition whole and, unlike Orthodox Halakhahists who operate with a rigid wall of separation between Halakhah and Aggadah, deliberately takes into account Aggadic factors. (By reckoning with Aggadah, we intend weighing religious, moral, social and esthetic factors in arriving at an Halakhic decision.) The author cites several illuminating examples, of which we offer one: the paradoxical assertion that "at times, the violation of the Torah results in its fulfillment."¹¹ In the Talmud, the statement appears in a purely aggadic context. And yet, the author implies, the insight can occasionally be legitimately employed in present-day Halakhah. Similarly, one adds, if the Talmud, on occasion, invokes the overriding spirit of the law as expressed in the verse: "Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace" (Prov. 3:17), why can not contemporary Halakhahists follow suit?

Here and there, however, this reviewer suspects that the author has

8. *Yevamot* 118b.

9. *Even Haezer* 140:5.

10. *Bava Me'zia* 5a.

11. *Menahot* 99a.

overstated his otherwise very convincing case by adducing evidence from sources that can not stand critical scrutiny. We refer to the following instance:

Jewish religious tradition likewise realizes the limitations of Scripture and tradition. Emphasis is therefore put on common sense as a qualification of the spiritual leader. It was said that learning of Scriptures and of tradition without common sense was of no avail (pp. 29, 30).

The source of the latter statement, indicated by the author, is to be found in the Alphabet of R. Akiba, a pseudipigraphical, kabbalistic midrash assigned to the seventh century. An examination of the passage reveals that the word *binah*, which the author renders as "common sense," really intends, in its context, mystical discernment.¹² This very minor caveat aside, one may sum up Prof. Falk's approach to the Halakhah as one that at once marks a significant departure from that regnant in Orthodox Halakhic circles and, yet, one that repeatedly finds a *point d'appui* within the tradition itself.

Perhaps, following the author, the best point of departure for a consideration of the gap between traditional values as expressed in the Halakhah and those that predominate in modern Western society is the case of democracy. Broadly speaking, the latter comprehends such values as equality before the law, integration, freedom of conscience and the inalienable rights of the individual. Now clearly, the value of equality hardly comports with a Jewish society whose original structure was hierarchical and patriarchal. Biblical society ranged from king to priest to commoner, the latter consisting of freemen and slaves. In subsequent generations — in the Talmudic period — commoners were again subdivided into a number of classes with certain limitations on each as to whom they could legally marry. But if one views Jewish society in historical perspective, a distinct movement towards equality emerges. A major shift in that direction, springing from the democratic impulse, was the displacement of the priesthood as the authoritative interpreters of the law by the Sages in the period of the Second Temple. Another milestone on that road was the move towards equalizing the status of the woman in divorce proceedings. One has reference to Rabbenu Gershom's ordinance (10th century) on the subject. According to traditional Halakhah as laid down in the Mishnah, a woman could be divorced against her will by her husband, but only under very exceptional circumstances could the wife exercise a similar prerogative. Rabbenu Gershom's ordinance, universally codified as Halakhah, provided that divorce required the consent of the wife. While the direction is unmistakeable, full equality for women in Jewish law and practice is still a desideratum, a desideratum that our author avows.

But what of the broader issue of the election of Israel vis-à-vis the other nations? The chosenness of Israel is unquestionably a central pillar

12. *Binah* is, of course, the name of one of the ten *Sefirot*.

in the conceptual structure of Judaism, an explicit corollary of the covenant between God and Israel, a concept which the author invokes repeatedly. His interpretation is instructive. Jewish distinctiveness is a penultimate stage in the spiritual growth of mankind. In biblical metaphor, Israel is God's first-born son. Or, to put the matter in the author's terms:

The idea of election is thus a metaphor expressing the subjective feeling of the Jewish people of being loved rather than the objective order of the world (p. 102).

The latter point of view bears significant implications for one's attitude toward the assignment of inferior status to non-Jews by the traditional Halakhah.

But as the author points out in an acute analysis, the value of equality, like most values, must be balanced off against another equally valid value: that of excellence, a fact universally recognized and reflected in social life. And it is to excellence in religious and moral terms that Israel committed itself when it entered upon its covenant with God. It is this consciousness, one submits, that informed the minds and the spirits of the choicest spokesmen of Judaism through the ages. It is reflected in the opinion in the Talmud that only when Israel behaves as the "sons of God" do they deserve the latter appellation. Or, to put it otherwise, the sense of vocation is a constituent element of Jewish being. Where it exists among other peoples and religions it may be traced to Jewish sources, much as Christianity, thanks to Paul, termed itself the New Israel.

Finally, on this score as well as others, Prof. Falk strikes an integrative stance. Opposing values such as equality and excellence must be conceived not as a dichotomy but as a continuum. Who was it who said that, in logic, a contradiction is a disaster; in life, it is an opportunity. Thus, writing on the status of women in Judaism, he asserts:

This phenomenon (women playing an active role in the synagogue) must be taken as an innovation of egalitarian ethos which has its place besides the traditional patriarchal stance (p. 103).

In a similar vein, he writes:

Judaism will be the more viable, the greater its ability to integrate the values of democracy *without discarding other traditional forms* (p. 57, my italics).

As indicated above, Prof. Falk's approach to the Halakhah is to opt between alternative views to be found in the Halakhic tradition. Even more; it is historico-critical. From the vantage point, for example, of the modern understanding of language as a system of signs, he declares:

Many a distinction in rabbinical law must be viewed in the light of the cultural milieu. When these distinctions were made (men) believed in the magic of language . . . Once you realize the function of language as a system of signs, you cannot follow these distinctions . . . No rule should therefore link legal or religious effects to a specific word where the context itself is clear. The use of a wrong phrase cannot be interpreted in our world of thought as being fatal to an intended disposition (pp. 169–170).

In sum, then, what Prof. Falk proposes is an unfreezing of the Halakhah by some very definite criteria for the purpose of rendering it viable to-day. The proposition will find enthusiastic support in some circles and disdainful rejection in others.

The wider frame of reference within which the author places his discussion of Halakhah is his treatment of both assonances and dissonances between law and religion. In this context, he employs the term religion as having two distinct meanings; the first, exemplified by the values of Jewish religion, its postulates and practices; the second, as exemplified by Halakhic principles and practices. Both of these are viewed in the context of similar and dissimilar principles and practices of modern jurisprudence and legal philosophy. On the latter score, the book should have a wide appeal to students of the law, especially to those who, like the author, are equally committed to Jewish religion and Halakhah and, most especially, to those concerned with restoring to Halakhah its former title of queen of Jewish studies, a title reflective of Jewish life.

My Daughter Studies Hebrew and Arabic

DONIA CLENMAN

My daughter studies
Hebrew and Arabic.
No wishy-washy cosmopolitan,
her heart treads firmly
on Mount Scopus.
In her knapsack
she brings home
United Jerusalem —
ten sunny plates
with Hebrew and Arabic inscriptions.
On Shabbat,
Jehovah and Allah
break bread
in bountiful coexistence.

DONIA CLENMAN *writes short stories, librettos and poetry.*

REVIEWS

Another View of Buber

Buber on God and the Perfect Man. By PAMELA VERMES. Brown Judaica Series 13. Chico, California. Scholars Press, 1980. 271 pp., \$15.00.

Reviewed by S. DANIEL BRESLAUER

THE IRONY of Martin Buber's stature as a "Jewish" theologian among Christian thinkers has perplexed some Jewish writers and angered still others. Buber's self-confessed distance from the normative Jewish tradition and his restlessness with Jewish religious practice makes him suspect for many Jews, who cannot be content with the non-Jewish exaltation of Buber unless Buber's modernist and nontraditional approach to Judaism is clearly presented and explained. Even those Jews who find in Buber a new path to Jewish life and a means of revitalizing Jewish faith are uncomfortable with the portrayal of him as representative of the Judaic tradition. Paula Vermes recognizes these concerns and seeks to address them. Equally important for her is the risk that Christians take by ignoring the distinctly Judaic stance which Buber assumes. Christians must hear Buber as a Jewish spokesman, she feels, or miss important elements in his message. "It is uncanny," she writes at one point, "how faithful Buber has been to Jewish tradition . . ." (145).

Seeking to elucidate this faithfulness which is uncanny precisely because Buber himself took such pains to demarcate his differences from tradition, Vermes begins by striving "to bind our souls to his." She follows Buber's development as a writer and thinker from his earliest to his more mature writings. This introductory survey will initiate the beginning reader of Buber into the variety and complexity of his works. But readers

familiar with the secondary literature will miss in Vermes the rich anecdotal material in Hodes, *Martin Buber: An Intimate Portrait*, the well-crafted and intellectually satisfying organization of Roy Oliver's *The Wanderer and the Way*, or the masterly insight and scholarship of Maurice Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue*. Those seeking a clear and sympathetic overview are still served best by Malcolm Diamond, *Martin Buber: Jewish Existentialist*. The value of Vermes' presentation lies in the gems that she has culled from Buber's correspondence. The letters by Franz Rosenzweig, Judah Magnes, and other of his associates provide illuminating insight into Buber's personal development.

The result of traveling along Buber's personal road of growth is, for Vermes, the discovery that his link with the Jewish tradition is found primarily through the Bible and Hasidism. Seeking to show the Judaic relevance of Buber's biblical studies she turns to rabbinic literature, focusing on theological ideas found in the *targumim* and the midrash. The Jewish reader, however, is a bit startled to find almost no reference to halakhic issues in Vermes' texts. In discussing the vision of God given to Moses no mention is made of the *tefillin* — a reference which every Jew who chants *anim zemirot* on Shabbat naturally expects. When seeking to show a continuity between Buber's view of the Bible, rabbinic Judaism, and the Christian Book of Revelation, this lack is particularly glaring. The Jew is uncomfortable with Buber precisely because the Presence of God cannot be separated from the *commandments* of God. While some reconciliation between Buber and normative Jewish practice can, I believe, be achieved, Vermes appears to ignore this issue.

From Hasidism, Vermes finds

Buber taking the principle that religious life entails actualizing one's potential wholeness. Such an approach means that no particular model of hasidic *practice* but, rather, the hasidic goal of religious living, is binding. Vermes relies heavily on Buber's "The Way of Man According to the Teaching of Hasidism" as a resource for developing this idea. Readers might have benefited had she shown in detail how Buber transformed the raw material of Hasidism with its particularistic and exclusivist perspective into a humanistic statement. Buber's process of perceiving the universally human in hasidic teachings is at least as important as his view of what the sally human actually is.

Vermes reflects on Buber's restlessness with "religion" and emphasizes his important distinction between religiosity (the pious response) and religion (institutionalized forms). While others have seen that distinction, she places it in the total context of Buber's thinking. Her unique contribution is to distinguish between "relation" and "encounter." The latter is an event taking place between an I and a You; the former is the precondition for any encounter, the being in a state of connection with an other. Because relation exists even without encounter, it can be present in times which seem devoid of true meeting, times in which the face of God is eclipsed. Buber, according to Vermes, issues a call for *teshuvah*, for turning to true encounter. Following Buber's invitation we are led to recognize the fact of relationship; to be human is to exist — at times — in the state of connectedness with others. On the basis of this realization we can turn to those others and genuinely meet them. Religion begins as reflection on such genuine meeting, on the basis of an encounter which arises out of a

human recognition of relationship. Because religion has become crystallized it has thwarted this basic recognition; it has come to block, rather than to express, religiousness. Vermes reaffirms the value of Buber's analysis and reminds readers both of their opportunities, because they stand in relationship, and of the obstacles which religion has placed in the way of encounter.

This reminder is a welcome one. Whether or not Vermes has succeeded in making Buber's Jewishness apparent — and I am uncomfortable with the particular elements in Judaism that she emphasizes rather than in her laudable attempt — she has caught and expressed several underemphasized aspects of Buber's message. Her documentation and use of correspondence material have much enriched her offering.

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Plus ça change. . .?

Vichy France and the Jews. By MICHAEL R. MARRUS and ROBERT O. PAXTON. New York. Basic Books, 1981. 432pp., \$20.95.

Reviewed by FREDERICK BUSI

THE TREATMENT of Jews by the Vichy French government remains a vexing subject. The question aroused renewed curiosity and controversy after the appearance of Ophuls' documentary, *Le Chagrin et la pitié*. Previously, the issue has been treated, in part, by French writers, but it is fitting that the task fell this time to two North American scholars, Marrus and Paxton, to write a sober account and analysis of Vichy anti-Semitic policy. These authors rightly point out that the Draco-

nian measures taken by Vichy would, in all likelihood, have been impossible had France not been occupied by the Nazis. At the same time, they are quick to indicate that Vichy anticipated German requests for deporting Jews and, in many cases, included even children who had not yet been asked for. From these two apparently conflicting positions there emerge complex questions demanding equally complex answers.

In order to untangle this mess of domestic wartime policy the authors are correct in emphasizing the effects of national demoralization produced by the 1930s and the defeat of 1940 that devastated France. After the rise of the Nazis, worldwide anti-Semitism received great attention and in France it was exacerbated by widespread depression. Much of this book's focus is on the question of the deportations. Marrus and Paxton compare France's policy towards Jews with that of other countries occupied by Germany. It should be noted that such comparisons are not easy to establish. In Hungary and Romania, for example, officials were not reticent about turning over Jews from territory which they had recently captured. But despite strong native anti-Semitic traditions, many Jews did manage to survive. Bulgaria provided a rare case of actually standing up to the Nazis and saving most of its small Jewish community.

It is important to recognize that Bulgaria, like Denmark and Holland, had no effective anti-Semitic forces. This last country had become a haven for Jewish refugees to such an extent that, before the war, calls for reversing immigration were also to be heard there, just as in France. Despite some public support for the Jews during the war, almost the entire Dutch community was annihilated. The major explanation for this catastrophe in

Holland was the country's small, compact size and the lack of escape avenues for Jews.

The same thing could not be said of France. It was Europe's largest country, after the Soviet Union, and more people should have been able to escape across its borders. In fact, some did, faring better in the hands of fascist Italy, Spain and Portugal than they did in France. Today, it is difficult to remember that Pétain's regime, unlike some others in occupied Europe, initially had solid and legitimate support from the country and from foreign powers. Vichy was not forced but, rather, initiated anti-Jewish policy with some aspects that were more severe than what the Germans at first had demanded. A list of the relevant laws that it enacted are indicated in the French — though not the English — version of this study by Marrus and Paxton.

Almost one third of the Jews in France were deported to death camps. After the war, Vichy, on trial, claimed the figure would have been much higher without its intervention. This argument sounds implausible because, with few exceptions, Vichy was not really interested in saving Jews but in deporting them. Who, for the most part, were the victims? According to the authors, "the most vulnerable by far, of course, were those who were most unwelcome in France, the refugees from Germany and eastern Europe for whom no one would speak any more; among that last category, the poorest were the most vulnerable of all." Professor Paula Hyman, in *From Dreyfus to Vichy*, recently examined the lives of these despised Jews up to the eve of the last world war. They were largely Yiddish in culture, leftist in politics and generally and strongly disliked by the French.

It is true that Vichy spared some native Jews. But close examination

of its anti-Semitic policies suggests that Jews were turned over to the Germans in the hopes of obtaining a more favorable status for France in the new order. If Nazi victory had proved durable there is no reason to doubt that native French Jews would have followed the same path trodden by the recent immigrants. Vichy France was not ultimately interested in protecting Jews; its policy was to have them deported in exchange for favors which never materialized.

Did Vichy France know that deportation meant death? After the Liberation it said no. But, during the war, it should have taken little imagination to figure out what was in store for deported Jews. Marrus and Paxton carefully trace the developing patterns of repression and deportation in occupied France, where the first great deportations took place after German threats to execute hostages publicly in reprisal for attacks on German soldiers in France. Out of concern for arousing public opinion these hostages were deported.

Jewish men were the first to be sent to the east and, purportedly, were participating in the same kind of forced labor abroad that was also imposed on French men. But the general deportation of Jewish women, children, the sick and the old obviously had nothing to do with this forced labor program. The authors show that the frantic scenes of family separations did elicit some public protest, but the sympathy was of short duration and of little effect.

Some Jews, however, were sheltered at great risk by French citizens. In the religious sector, despite some Catholic aid, Protestants were proportionately more helpful. Vichy had close contacts with the Catholic church but the regime did not heed the protests of a few prelates. Much of the church's concern was over the fate of converted Jews.

One of those saved was a young Jew named Lustiger whose parents were sent off to a death camp and who was raised by Catholic family. He converted, became a priest and is now the archbishop of Paris. He still does not wish to discuss his past and the war years. In this regard his assimilation is complete and he differs little from the rest of his countrymen. When Vichy asked the Vatican about its policy it replied by denying Nazi racism in principle but also declared that Jews were, nonetheless, an ethnic and moral problem which deserved to be strongly suppressed in a Christian society. From this response Vichy drew its own conclusions.

The church alone, to be sure, does not deserve unique blame for the sequence of events. Many Jews in France could not believe that their country would stoop so low in complicity with Nazi anti-Semitic policies. Most of the French were indifferent, a state of affairs which allowed a militant minority to carry out its murderous program. The expulsion took place with the full initiative and cooperation of the French state, especially its police forces. In all of France the Germans had only 2,500 policemen and they relied heavily on the French to do their dirty work. Although the authors allude to the policy of informing against Jews, they do not reveal its full scope. Several thousand of the French worked part time for the Germans and helped turn in Jews and other undesirables. Small wonder that no succeeding French government has dared make public their names, thereby protecting the guilty.

Marrus and Paxton are correct in stressing the rise of xenophobia in the 1930s to account for the genocidal policies that followed, but it is questionable to underestimate the latent power of French anti-Semitism during these years. True, small extremist groups existed in

other lands, Holland for example, yet in that country they were unable either to arouse much anti-Semitism among the general population or to cause it to sink into indifference.

The authors do mention the earlier classic years of French anti-Semitism, centering on Edouard Drumont, but they do not sufficiently stress the link that bound those of the 1890s to those of the 1930s. A good example of this phenomenon would be Henry Coston, whom they mention in passing. He was, and long remained, one of France's most rabid anti-Semites and fascists and the editorial successor of Drumont's journal, *La Libre Parole*. On p. 31 of their book, the authors mistakenly refer to this famous journal in "1889" when, in fact, it was not founded until 1892. To be sure, Coston's following was very small, but in his correspondence to me he indicated that it was he who initiated Darquier de Pellepoix into the advantages of political anti-Semitism. During the Vichy years, Darquier succeeded Catholic lay-leader Xavier Vallat as head of the government's special anti-Semitic ministry and became a ferocious, unrepentant scourge of the Jews.

It would be unwise to come away from this book with the impression that the French, in general, are anti-Semitic, despite their dismal record during the war. Yet it is equally important to recognize that they are not as tolerant of strangers

as they flatter themselves to be. Americans, especially, should not be smug about the fate of the Jews. In similar circumstances their own disliked minorities could conceivably receive similar treatment. American Jews, in particular, will be saddened to read, on p. 196, the opinion of FDR whose words in private accepted the "specific and understandable complaints which the Germans bore towards the Jews in Germany. . ." If these represent his true sentiments on the question, then his failure, supported by the USA in general, to save some Jews also becomes understandable.

A few years ago one of France's eminent spokesmen on Jewish affairs, Rabi, speculated whether Jews have any place or future in France. After reading this study by Marrus and Paxton one comes to appreciate the roots of this radical doubt, and it helps to explain the reason why the France of 1940-1944 acted in the way that it did. One also comes away from this study with a good historical and cultural background to understand aspects of Gaullist foreign policy and the ensuing resurgence of domestic anti-Semitism in France. The French are not, it must be repeated, anti-Semitic in general, but it must also be recognized that enough of a current of anti-Semitism has proven to be durable over the past century to cause havoc in times of national crisis.

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When Begin and Sadat Met

Breakthrough: A Personal Account of the Egypt-Israel Peace Negotiations. By MOSHE DAYAN. New York. Alfred A. Knopf, 1981. 368 pp. \$15.00.

Egypt and Israel. By HOWARD M. SACHAR. New York. Richard Marek Publishers, 1981. 384 pp. \$19.95.

Reviewed by MELVIN I. UROFSKY

THE OPEN accounts of how Israel and Egypt reached their historic accord are by now part of the contemporary mythos. The whole world seemingly held its breath as Anwar el-Sadat offered to go to Jerusalem, Menachem Begin accepted the dare, and Jimmy Carter pushed the two men on down the road to the Camp David agreements. Two new books now go beyond the public record and, with surprisingly close correlation, detail the behind-the-scenes pressures which led to the Israel-Egyptian peace treaty.

The two books do, of course, duplicate each other in many ways, for the facts they deal with are the same. But both should be read, for they are really complementary. Sachar is the scholar, precise, analytic, writing with his usual grace and clarity, deliberately attempting to be neutral. His widespread contacts enabled him to interview personally many of the leading participants on both sides. Dayan's memoir is also well-written, but naturally biased, and extremely personal; in many ways it is the continuation and completion of his *Story of My Life* (1978).

Sachar's most important contribution is placing the agreement in the larger contexts of Egyptian and Israeli history, Egyptian nationalism as it overthrew British colonialism, and the bloody, bitter relations between the two states as they fought five wars from 1948 to

1973. But beneath the overt hostility, forces were working toward peace, and by 1975 both sides desperately needed a surcease from continuous warfare. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin recognized this, and so did Sadat; had the Labor scandals not erupted, it would have been Rabin who met Sadat at Ben-Gurion Airport. Sachar makes a convincing case that while Sadat, Begin and Carter made great contributions, economic and political forces were driving the two nations together.

Moshe Dayan, obviously, played a major role in the negotiations, and while his narrative, obviously based on a diary as well as on documents, agrees in large measure with that of Sachar, the interpretation is much different and the perspective more one-sided. Dayan is quite frank in his evaluation of the other actors, especially Menachem Begin and Jimmy Carter. Begin is evidently as arrogant and autocratic in private as in public, expecting his ministers to carry out orders unquestioningly rather than to provide advice and options. Sadat also was often inflexible, yet managed to convey a public image of reasonableness. And, of course, it is Sadat who captured the world's imagination by flying to Jerusalem.

The two books differ most widely in their assessment of Jimmy Carter. At Camp David, when it appeared that the two sides could not agree, according to Sachar, it was Carter who pulled it off. Despite an apparent deadlock, Carter and his advisers continued to negotiate quietly from cabin to cabin. The American president's command of the issues at all times was masterful, his presentation of his own views increasingly forceful. With his legal advisers, he submitted version after version of "compromise" drafts. When it appeared that agreement might be reached on the Sinai but not on Palestinian autonomy in the

West Bank, it was Carter who overrode his subordinates and insisted on concentrating on the Sinai accord, with a "fig leaf" statement putting the Palestinian issue in limbo.

To Dayan, on the other hand, Carter from the beginning evinced a pro-Egyptian stand, constantly criticizing Begin and the Israelis as stubborn and inflexible, and forcing them, often threatening them,

to give in on numerous issues. Whether Israel's gamble in doing so will pay off in a permanent peace, Dayan, who died shortly after publication of his book, did not know. He, like all of us, could only hope for the best.

MELVIN I. UROFSKY is professor of history at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Va.

transaction books

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From October through November, 1982

Listing of a book does not preclude its being reviewed in a subsequent issue of JUDAISM.

American Jewry

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Feingold, Henry L. *A Midrash on American Jewish History*. Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1982. xv+241 pp., \$8.95 (paper).

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